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SHOCK

CINEMA

Number 18 / Spring-Summer 2001

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Alan Clarke's Road •
Christine • Elephant

A Cold Wind in August

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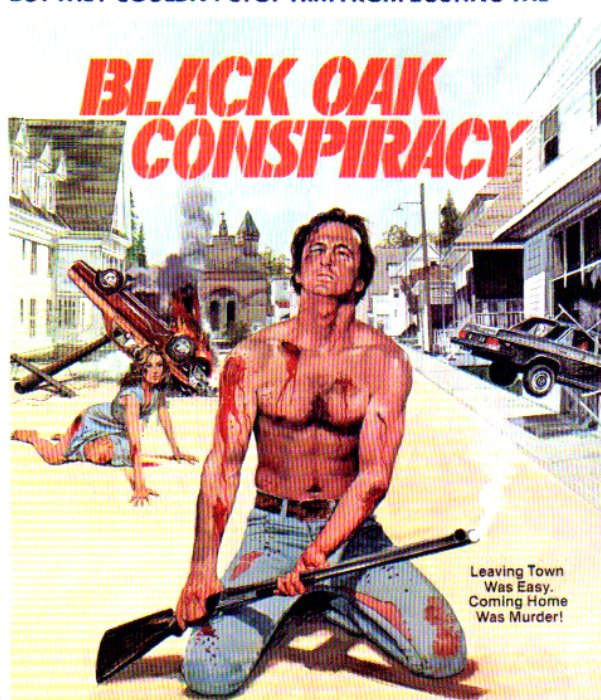
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KINJI FUKASAKU

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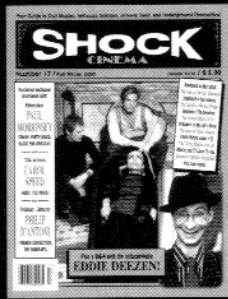
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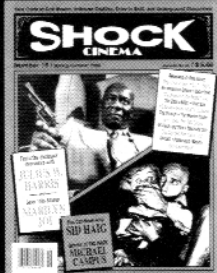
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SHOCK CINEMA Back Issues



SHOCK CINEMA 17. Fall/Wint. 2001. \$5. Interviews with Carol Speed, Eddie Deezen, Paul Morrissey, Philip D'Antoni. Reviews include *Year of the Sex Olympics*, *Your Three Minutes Are Up*, *Steam Bath*, *Whistle and I'll Come to You*, *Pearls Before Swine*, *The She-Rat*, *Synanon*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 16. Spr./Sum. 2000. \$5. Interviews with Julius W. Harris, Marilyn Joi, Michael Campus, Sid Haig. Reviews include *Play It As It Lays*, *Go To Hell!!!*, *The Zebra Killer*, *Baby Love*, *Ghostwatch*, *Jerry Lewis' The Jazz Singer*, *Of Freaks and Men*, etc.



SHOCK CINEMA 15. Fall/Winter 1999. \$5. Interviews with Fred Williamson, Hugh Keays-Byrne. Reviews include *Je T'Aime Je T'Aime*, *The Story of Mankind*, *The Milky Life*, *Brother Theodore Speaks*, *Tiny Tim's Street of Dreams*, *The Cool World*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 14. Spring/Summer 1999. \$5. Interviews with Paul Koslo, A.C. Stephen and Haji. Reviews include *Coming Apart*, *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?*, *Forty Deuce*, *Go Ask Alice*, *Mark IV Productions' Rapture* movies, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 13. Fall/Winter 1998. \$5. Interviews with Don Stroud, Russ Meyer. Reviews include *Who Are You Polly Maggoo?*, *Punishment Park*, *Pound*, *Bigfoot and Wildboy*, *Jag Mandir*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 12. Spring/Summer 1998. \$5. Interview with William Smith. Reviews include *Skatetown U.S.A.*, *Werewolf of Woodstock*, *Violent Playground*, *Gong Show Movie*, *Evil Roy Slade*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 11. Fall/Winter 1997. \$5. Reviews include *Trans-Europ-Express*, *The Big Cube*, *Dennis Hopper in The American Dreamer*, *They Call Her One-Eye*, *Roger Vadim's Charlotte*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 10. Spring/Summer 1997. \$5. Reviews include *The Phynx*, *Kid Blue*, *Andy Warhol's Bike Boy*, *Crazy Thunder Road*, *A Man Called Dagger*, *Candice Rialson in Pets*, *Mad Foxes*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 9. Fall/Winter 1996. \$5. Reviews include *Blast of Silence*, *Dusty and Sweets McGee*, *The Maltese Bippy*, *Black Moon*, *Dirty Little Billy*, *Timothy Leary's Turn On*, *Tune In*, *Drop Out*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 8. Spring/Summer 1996. \$5. Reviews include *Daisies*, *Let My Puppets Come*, *Who Killed Teddy Bear?*, *God's Angry Man*, *Pink Narcissus*, *The Candy Snatchers*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 7. 1995. \$4. Reviews include *Beyond Love and Evil*, *Klaus Kinski's Paganini*, *Son of Dracula*, *The Saragossa Manuscript*, *Privilege*, *Flaming Creatures*, *Cisco Pike*, etc.

SHOCK CINEMA 6. 1994. \$4. Reviews include *Farewell Uncle Tom*, *The World's Greatest Sinner*, *Skidoo*, *The Chelsea Girls*, *Chafed Elbows*, *Paul Bartel's Shelf Life*, *Young Playthings*, etc.

Welcome to the latest dose of SHOCK CINEMA, the magazine devoted to the ever-mutating world of cult cinema. This edition is highlighted by a trio of outstanding interviews. First up is a talk with actor **Jesse Vint**, who energized such '70s drive-in classics as *MACON COUNTY LINE*, *BLACK OAK CONSPIRACY*, *BUG*, *BOBBIE JO AND THE OUT-LAW*, and many more. Next up is a lengthy Q&A with **Victor Argo**, who's appeared in more cinematic masterpieces than anyone I can recall — *KING OF NEW YORK*, *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS*, *LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*, as well as my all-time favorite film, *TAXI DRIVER*. Finally, there's director **Kinji Fukasaku**, who's best known in the US for Japanese oddities like *THE GREEN SLIME*, but also helmed outrageous Yakuza dramas and the brutal new *BATTLE ROYALE*... If that weren't enough, we have nearly 100 reviews of obscure films and videos — from long-forgotten drive-in dementia and overseas oddities that never made it to the US, to some relatively new titles which still haven't found a US company with the balls to distribute 'em. I hope you enjoy the new issue (if you don't, I've busted my ass for six months — while downing a shitload of Bushmills in the process — for nothin').

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: Single copies are still \$5 (postpaid) and a 4-issue subscription is \$18 (with all checks made out directly to Steve Puchalski, dammit). Also, when sending in a first-time subscription, please let me know which issue you'd like to begin with. As usual, subscribers will know when to renew by checking the upper right corner of their mailing label...For overseas readers, single copies are \$8, and \$30 gets you a 2-year sub (US currency only)...As for back issues, #6 & 7 are \$4 apiece, while 8 - 17 are \$5 each. All issues are sent via First Class Mail, so there's less chance of the continually inept (and increasingly pricey) USPS losing the damned things.

As always, I'm continually looking for new interview possibilities, so if you're in touch with any SHOCK CINEMA-style filmmakers or performers, just let me know. Note: If they've been interviewed to death in other mags, I'm usually not that interested. Plus, you can skip all scream queens and DIY filmmakers with delusions of grandeur (you know the type I'm referring to). Also, all outside contributions (Film Flotsam, interviews, etc.) must be on disc or via email, since I'm a two-fingered typist and simply don't have time to transcribe pages of hand-written scrawls anymore. My apologies to all of you Luddites out there.

On the home front, there's little news, since my regular freelance assignments and ever-increasing SC responsibilities have turned me into a veritable hermit. Oddly enough, I kinda enjoy getting a break from society — particularly Manhattan — since there seem to be more loud, stupid, arrogant people on that island than ever before.

Back in the mid-'80s, when I first entered the zine-scene, and hunkered down in front of my TV and VCR with stacks of bootleg videos, there was something sacrilegious about watching these sleazy movies at home and foregoing the theatrical experience. Sure, it's great to watch a Fred Williamson movie in the comfort of your easy chair, with a fridge full of Ballantine Ale, but if you haven't seen one in a Times Square shithole, surrounded by junkies, cockroaches and a marijuana haze, you've missed an important part of the fun.

Nowadays, I've changed my mind, and I rarely even go to the movies anymore. Why? Of course, now that I review films for a living (and often watch more than two dozen in a week), the last thing I want to do when I get a much-needed breather is see a movie! Even more important, ticket prices in NYC have finally reached that once-impossible-to-imagine ten dollar mark! Then, if you're married or taking a date, double it. If you're even mildly thirsty or hungry, the outlandish concession prices will cost you another sawbuck. So, you've spent \$30 for a movie, and once you take your seat, what can you expect? Ringing cel phones, crying babies, babbling children, and those inconsiderate scabwads who loudly gab during the movie, as if they were in their living room. Let's not even talk about the increasingly lazy theatres, with employees who can barely do their job and piss-poor projection. I'm sure a lot of SC readers have had their fair share of crap-tacular moviegoing experiences too. It's no wonder that so many people are embracing their home-video systems, where they can comfortably watch movies on big-screen TV's with theatrical sound. And with DVDs, you can get them in widescreen, and actually own the damned movie — complete with extras and audio commentary — for less than it costs for a night at the movies. While the much-missed 42nd St. grindhouses might've been threatening, skanky and uncomfortable, at least I enjoyed the overall experience. Nowadays, all I can expect is to get pissed off at some fucksticks behind me. So what's my point? As usual, I'm just bitching about crap that gets on my nerves, and now that I'm out of space, you can get onto the mag. Enjoy. 4/1/01

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Cover photo: Victor Argo in McBAIN

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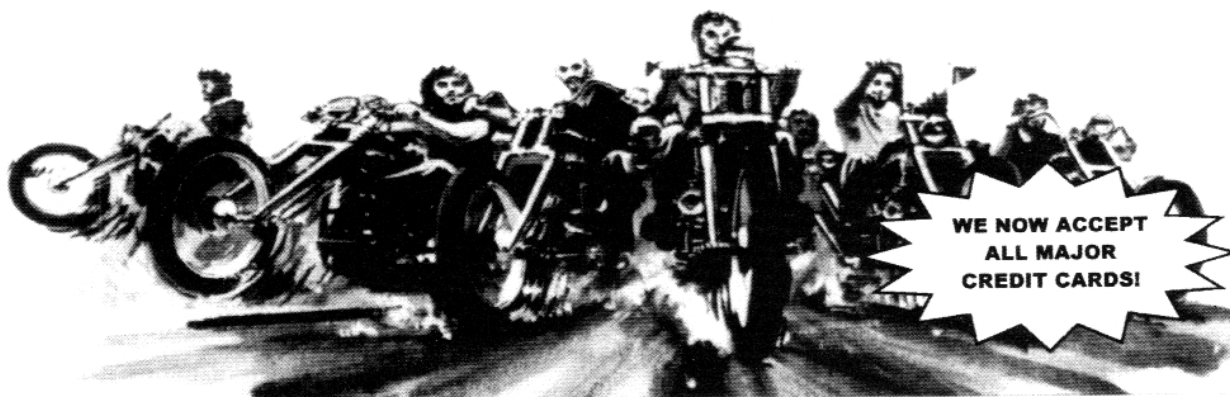
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SHOCK CINEMA talks with Actor / Writer / Director

JESSE VINT

By CHRIS POGGIALI

Sometime around the summer of 1988, the program directors at every local TV station in the country must've gotten together in their war room and decided to stop showing B-movies on Saturday afternoons. "Why should we beg Crazy Eddie and that wheezing old man from Carvel to peddle their insane prices and Fatty the Whale cakes during MACON COUNTY LINE," some young suit surely sneered, "when we can sell off 30-minute blocks of time to spray-on hair and turtle wax infomercials?" Sure, AMC and TNT still run with the "B" ball now and then, but gone are the days when you could crash on the couch for 5 hours on a Saturday afternoon and flick through a half-dozen programs like "9 in the Afternoon" and "Morgus" and "Commander USA's Groovy Movies" and the great "Drive-In Movie" on channel 5 in New York.

The Saturday afternoon movies I remember were grainy, scratched, edited prints of the low-budget action, horror, and sci-fi movies that had played the drive-ins and urban action theatres 3-15 years earlier. Sometimes these movies were from major studios like Fox and Universal, but more frequently they were the products of AIP, New World, Avco-Embassy, Crown, Dimension, and a handful of other independents that flourished throughout the 1960s and '70s. These were lean, mean movies that played by their own set of rules, with their own team of players: David Carradine, Jim Brown, Joe Don Baker, Claudia Jennings, Pam Grier, Fred Williamson, Robert Forster, William Smith...

The first time I saw the terrific thriller MACON COUNTY LINE — on a sweltering Saturday afternoon 17 summers ago — I was immediately struck by the effortless charm and amiability of its two lead actors, Alan and Jesse Vint. I had no idea who they were, but they appeared to be brothers in real life playing brothers in a low-budget movie, which brought a greater sense of realism to a story that claimed to be based on fact. I didn't have to wait long to see the Vints in action a second time; two Saturdays later I caught them as Marjoe Gortner's smart aleck next-door neighbors in EARTHQUAKE. During the next three or four years, I saw them again and again — Alan in BADLANDS, CHECKERED FLAG OR CRASH, BREAKOUT, UNHOLY ROLLERS; Jesse in SILENT RUNNING, DEATHSPORT, BUG, BOBBIE JO AND THE OUTLAW, and FAST CHARLIE, THE MOONBEAM RIDER. "These Vint brothers," I decided, "are Saturday afternoon stars."

And I've never read interviews with either of them.

I spotted Jesse's screenplay credits on HOMETOWN U.S.A. and BLACK OAK CONSPIRACY not long after I became interested in screenwriting myself. Around the time "Taps" was being played for the Saturday afternoon B-movies, Jesse wrote and directed ANOTHER CHANCE, a comedy that played in theatres while dozens of other low-budget films were being released directly to videocassette. He's in CHINATOWN and LITTLE BIG MAN. He has worked for William Castle, Laurence Harvey and Roger Corman. He dated Claudia Jennings and is frequently mistaken for Scott Wilson.

Here's the interview with Jesse Vint I wish I could

have read 17 summers ago, when I only knew him as the co-star of MACON COUNTY LINE. Don't wait for Saturday afternoon — read it now and enjoy.

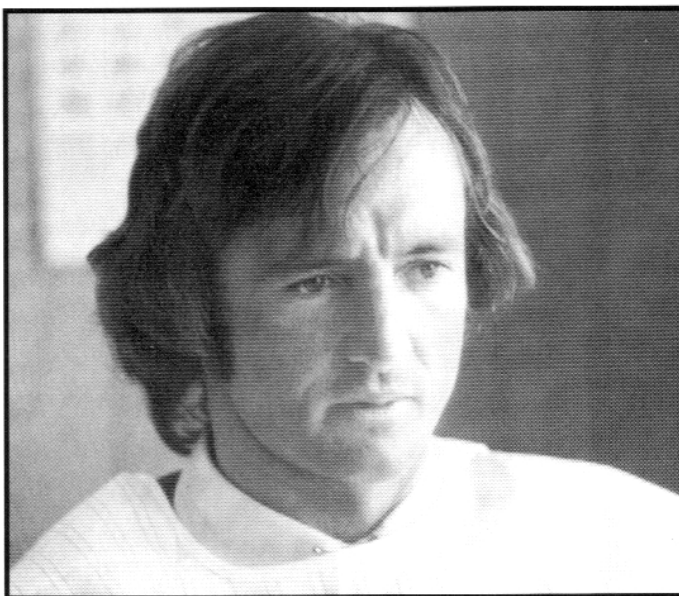
SC: Tell me a little about your background.

Vint: When my dad was 34 years old, he designed the largest mining truck in the world for Unit Rig and Equipment Company, which he was the president of at the time. It was the second largest company in Tulsa, Oklahoma. So I was brought up in a business world. I took business subjects in school, but they bored me and I didn't do well in them. When I got to Oklahoma University, after my second year, I became so bored

he's a special effects man and not an actor's director. He needed very strong actors who could work well together to pull that off. I didn't think it was an engaging script at all. I remember reading it and thinking, "This is a one-man show after the first twenty minutes. It's just Bruce Dern and the robots."

SC: How did you become involved with THE PIGS, a low-budget horror movie written and directed by character actor Marc Lawrence?

Vint: I can't believe you're bringing that guy up! That guy... (Laughs) He's not such a bad guy. He tried not to be, anyway. He told me at the Actors' Studio that he was making a film to get his daughter, Toni Lawrence, into a film, and he wondered if I would help out. Everyone did this down at the Actors' Studio. People were always saying, "I've got a play I'd like you to do," or "Can you come by the writers group tonight and read a scene for me?" So I thought this was just another volunteer gig. It wasn't a SAG film. I didn't get paid for it. I didn't think it was ever going to get released. I didn't see any way that it could get released. Seven or eight years later, in 1978 or '79, somebody called me and said, "Y'know you're on TV now?" I said, "Oh yeah? Doing what?" They said, "You're driving around in this truck, and there are all these pigs eating people." I said, "What?! That's not me — that's Scott Wilson or Dennis Hopper." They said, "No, it's you!" I said, "I've never done a film like that! I don't know what the hell you're talking about!" They said, "It's on ELVIRA. Turn it on." Well, I turned it on just as the clip went off and Elvira's laying there on the sofa, saying "Boy, it's sure taking that sheriff a long time to figure out what's going on here!" (Laughs) What is she talking about? Then — oh my God! Please, don't tell



Jesse Vint in the TV-western BELLE STAR (1981)

that I realized I couldn't spend my life in business. I was restless and I needed adventure, so I decided to be like my idols — Jack Kerouac, Jack London, Mark Twain. I decided to move around a little bit and get an enormous amount of experience so I could maybe write about it some day. I stopped in New York and studied acting there, and I fell in love with it right away. I studied there for a couple of years, and then I came out to Los Angeles. When I got here, I didn't know a soul in the state of California. Not one phone number. I had a pregnant wife who was 17 years old and I had a motorcycle, and that was it. When I auditioned for the Actors' Studio, I asked my brother Alan to come out and be my partner because I didn't know anybody in California. He had never studied acting before. So we did the Biff and Happy scene [from DEATH OF A SALESMAN] for our Actors' Studio audition. There were 600 at that audition, and 12 passed — and Alan and I were 2 of the 12.

SC: You worked with Bruce Dern at the Actors' Studio?

Vint: We did scenes together, and he commented on my work quite a bit. He liked me and recommended me for that part in SILENT RUNNING. That was his one request before doing the film — that he wanted me in it. [Director] Douglas Trumbull is a great guy, but

me...and then they cut to the film. I saw the pigs running around and I heard that awful squealing. I said, "Jesus Christ, they sold that piece of shit! They sold it, and it's playing, and I'll never fuckin' live it down!"

SC: That movie played in theatres for years under a number of different titles.

Vint: Oh, I know! Ross Hagen, this actor I'd worked with on MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE one time, came running up to me at the American Film Market — "Jesse Vint! Hey, how are ya?" I said, "Fine." He said, "Goddamn, I've got one of your films here, buddy! One of the best films you've ever done!" I said, "What's that?" "THE PIGS!" "The what?!" "THE PIGS, man!" "THE PIGS?" "Yeah, you and Marc Lawrence..." I said, "Oh my God, please, you're kidding!" He said, "No! It's one of our best sellers! We change the title every four years and sell it as a new film. We go all over Asia doing that. They don't know the difference!"

SC: It was called DADDY'S DEADLY DARLING when it played on 42nd Street in 1982.

Vint: Oh yeah? That's the perfect place for it! (Laughs) I'll tell you something else — I was in to read for Steven Spielberg for his first film, THE SUGARLAND EXPRESS. After the reading, the casting director came after me down the street and said, "I think you

got that part, Jess. That reading was terrific, and Steve liked you a lot. He wants me to find out, do you have any film?" I told him, "I don't have any sustained dialogue in anything." And I didn't. I have maybe twenty lines in LITTLE BIG MAN but they're all spread out, and the same thing with SILENT RUNNING. It wasn't until MACON COUNTY LINE that I really did something I could show. But I said, "Hey, there's a guy at the Actors' Studio named Marc Lawrence who made a film with his daughter. I have a couple of scenes in that." So I called Marc and had him send that footage over, and I told Spielberg, "This is a low-budget thing, it's no big deal." Well, I never heard from Spielberg again. And I was shocked when I saw that William Atherton had gotten that part in THE SUGARLAND EXPRESS, because he was completely wrong for it. 100% wrong. I was right and he was not. I still don't get it. I guess Spielberg was so put off by that PIGS film that he didn't want me tainting his project.

SC: You did BUG also.

Vint: Yeah, well, that was a payday for me. That's all it was. I didn't give a shit about the character I played, I didn't care about the movie — I thought it was gross, I thought it was dumb, but I did it because I had to pay some bills. And I did my best in it, because you can't walk through anything. If you agree to do a film, then you better give it 110%. Otherwise, don't do it at all.

SC: Did you enjoy working with producer William Castle?

Vint: I didn't even know who he was. People were telling me, "William Castle's the guy who slides ghosts down on cables during his movies!" I said, "Oh no, this sounds like a Barnum & Bailey huckster of some kind!" He was quite a character. Always standing around with a cigar in his face, telling all these stories. He just seemed to imagine himself a giant movie mogul of some kind. He interrupted people at will and talked over them. He'd say, "What's your name?" and when he'd see your mouth start moving, he'd go into a story and just talk over you. (Laughs) But for a lot of people, he was an innovator who brought interesting things to the film business. He definitely enjoyed what he was doing, that's for sure.

SC: You were in another horror movie around that time, WELCOME TO ARROW BEACH (a.k.a. TENDER FLESH).

Vint: I thought I was going to have the lead in that one. They told me flat out, "You've got the lead. Thank God we finally got somebody who can act out of all the people who've been auditioning." And then Laurence Harvey came in, and he was the director. I have no idea where he was in the first place, or why they told me I had the lead, but word got back to me that Laurence Harvey didn't want me for the lead. He said, "We need a guy who's like Jack Lemmon. We need a funny guy, and this guy's too much like a Robert Mitchum. Let's put him in as the hot rod driver." They called me and told me this, and of course I was put off by it, but I said, "Hot rod driver? OK, that'll be fun." And it was. I got to drive that neat canary yellow 1934 Ford, which had an Oldsmobile engine in it, I think. The cameras were mounted on the hood, shooting towards Meg Foster and myself, and I actually improvised a lot of dialogue because nobody was there to stop me. I started singing the words to "Maybelline" by Chuck Berry, and [the filmmakers] had absolutely no way of knowing I was doing this. So then Laurence Harvey and the others got back to the editing room to watch



the dailies, and when they saw that, they freaked. They called my agent — "Your guy was improvising all over the place and now we gotta get the rights to 'Maybelline'!"

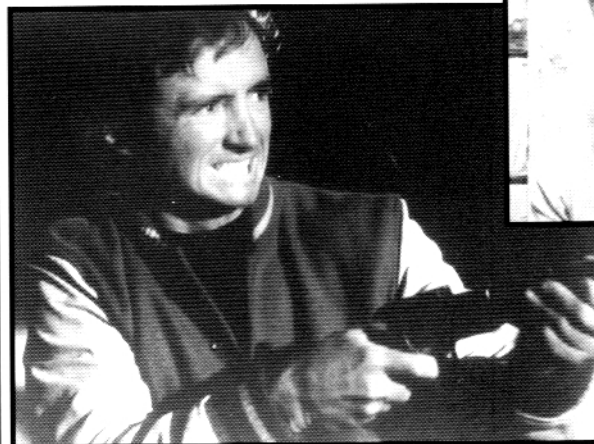
SC: That was Laurence Harvey's last movie.

Vint: He was dying of cancer at the time. I thought he was brilliant in BUTTERFIELD 8, so I was flattered to even be around the guy, but he didn't say two words to me. He was a hyper, panic-stricken, anxiety-ridden guy who kept screaming at everybody — just screaming at life in general. I don't know how much fun the rest of the cast had, but I didn't have to deal with him. They just planted the camera on the hood and I was gone, singing "Maybelline" at the top of my lungs.

SC: Two years before MACON COUNTY LINE, your brother Alan worked with director Richard Compton on the film WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS.

Vint: Right, so when MACON COUNTY LINE came around, Richard offered him that. I wasn't involved until later because the original concept of MACON COUNTY LINE was two guys — one white and one black — traveling through the South. The producers weren't sure about that, so Richard

said, "Alan's got a brother named Jess who's in LITTLE BIG MAN and SILENT RUNNING. He's also an actor down at the Actors' Studio. Why don't we bring him in and explore the idea of making the two characters brothers?" So they brought me in, and I did absolutely the worst reading of my life because [producer] Max Baer said, "OK, here's the scene. I want you to read it and be funny." I said, "Be funny? Where am I funny in these lines?" He said, "Look, let me explain it to you. Alan is the Sundance Kid. You're Butch. You're funny. He's not. So read this scene and be funny." I said, "But where are the funny lines to be funny with?" He said, "To hell with the lines! Make 'em up! Just say funny things! Be funny!" (Laughs) By the time I started reading, I was so flustered and embarrassed that I knew I wasn't going to get the part. When I finished, Max said, "Well, that's probably the worst goddamn reading I've ever seen." Luckily, Richard is a very perceptive and incisive guy.



Jesse & Alan Vint in MACON COUNTY LINE

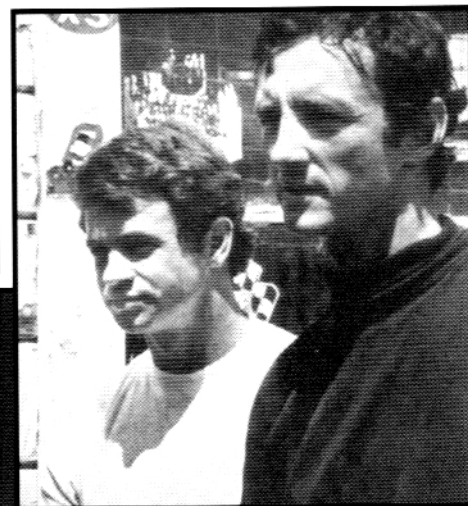
SC: He went to bat for you?

Vint: Yeah, he said, "I want to use him." Richard is one of the most even-tempered and creative people I've ever met in my life. After I left, [executive producer] Roger Camras told him, "That guy can't act for shit!"

We're gonna test him or I'm pulling my money out right now!" So here's the wisdom of Richard Compton — he came to me and said, "Jess, that audition was better than you think. It looks like you're going to get the part. But now I have to audition the girl, so come on out, we'll put you in the back of this Chrysler and shoot you with Cheryl Waters. Just be kind to her and help her out." I said, "OK, great, I'll do that." I had no idea that her audition was really for me! (Laughs) No idea! I was out there having fun, being a wisecracking wise guy like I love to be because the pressure was off me. I was being my usual wise guy self, not taking anything seriously. At the end of the day I said, "Cheryl, you did good work. I hope you get it." (Laughs) I didn't learn that the audition was for me until we were two weeks into shooting.

SC: In "Hawks on Hawks" by Joseph McBride, Howard Hawks talks briefly about his involvement with MACON COUNTY LINE.

Vint: Yes, he helped out quite a bit. After the film was finished, there was a test screening of it in Orange County, but at the time, it was a vicious film with a lot of unnecessary blood and guts in there. A lot of people in the theatre got up and walked out. They didn't have a distributor and they panicked — this is Max, Roger Camras, and Richard Compton. They said, "Oh my God, do we really have a turkey here?" I'm not sure where Max knew Howard Hawks from — it might've been through his father, Max Baer, Sr., who'd been heavyweight champion of the world. Anyway, Max knew him somehow, and I think [Hawks] was out in Palm Springs at the time, he was retired, and Max took the film out there. Howard watched it and made a lot of amazingly good suggestions, like "You have to move the point of tension up as fast as you can" and "These guys at the gas station — instead of getting them there on page 20, get them there on page 4, because that's when your movie begins." And he said, "You gotta take this gore out, because the audience isn't ready for a sudden leap from congeniality to horrendous violence."



SC: You had a small part in CHINA-TOWN, possibly the best American movie of the 1970s.

Vint: That was a lot of fun because I was out there with hardly anybody except Jack Nicholson, so I got to talk to him for a while. He's one of the most hilarious people I've ever been around, but the funny thing about him is that he's not trying to be funny. He's serious, and the more serious he is, the funnier he becomes. You laugh, but then you find yourself apologizing because you're laughing in his face while he's telling you something dead serious. I had to say, "Look, I'm not disrespecting what you're saying, it's just the way you're saying it — it's kind of funny to me."

Anyway, I'm sorry, go ahead." He was telling me about aliens that had penetrated our society and were now walking amongst us, taking over the world. He was serious! I said, "I don't know, Jack. It just doesn't make sense to me." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Because if the aliens are really that smart, then why don't they just announce themselves?" And he said, "Can you imagine what kind of panic that would create?"

SC: That's one of the campfire conversations from EASY RIDER!

Vint: I know! Why do you think I was laughing so hard? (Laughs) While he was telling me this, I realized he'd been improvising around the campfire while they were smoking grass — that this wasn't in the script, this was something he really believed! He was dead serious. I thought, "How can someone be such a genius when it comes to acting, but be so out there?" And I do believe that he's one of the greatest actors that ever lived, right up there with James Dean and Marlon Brando in his prime. So anyway, Polanski came up and was listening to our conversation. He said, "What do you think of this, Jess?" I said, "I think the same thing I did when I was 14 years old — that there's an infinite amount of space, an infinite amount of time, and an infinite amount of possibilities. It becomes probable that you're going to have life out there. Now, if you're asking me if I believe that this life has kidnapped somebody and brought them back and all kinds of crap like that, I don't believe it. I don't believe that they've penetrated anything." Polanski said, "You're talking about mathematical probability, right?" I said, "I am." He said, "The problem with that is, before there can be mathematical probability, there has to be a first occurrence. And there's never been a first occurrence. There have been no aliens and there have been no flying saucers. All of that is a bunch of goddamn horseshit!" And he walked off!

SC: Working with Roman Polanski must've been an interesting experience.

Vint: The best. He's what I expected every great director to be. I remember every word of direction he gave me, every word he said to other people — I remember everything as though it happened yesterday. He was fascinating to listen to, and he always knew exactly what he wanted. And I learned a lot from him about directing. When I directed ANOTHER CHANCE, I used the Polanski technique. He never second-guesses an actor's impulses, which is what a lot of other directors do. "When you say that line, turn this way and walk over here, and when she says this line, it should enrage you so you turn this way..." That's the way a lot of them direct a scene. By the time they finish, the actor is so stymied and so worried about the blocking that he can never be creative. What Polanski does is exactly the opposite. He lets the actor's impulses find the blocking for him. That's what blocks the scenes, and that's exactly the way it should be. He asks questions about the blocking to make sure all the elements are there, he finds out if there are any difficulties in lighting or covering it, and once he gets that all worked out, he says, "OK, light the set now, guys." Then he takes the actors aside and polishes what they've just done, giving suggestions or maybe just turning his head and listening to the dialogue.

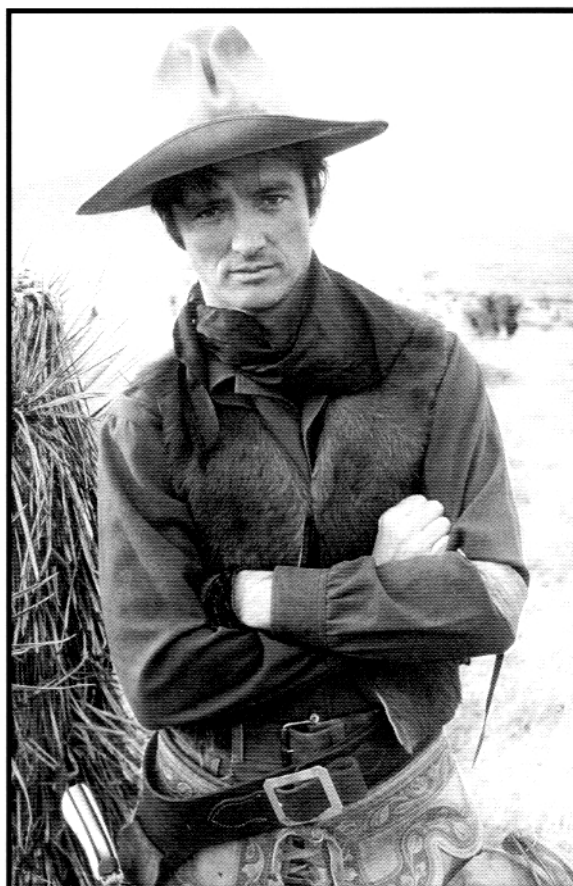
SC: Do you have any good stories about BOBBIE JO AND THE OUTLAW?

Vint: Sure, I could tell you some stories. That was a lot of fun to shoot. I could tell you some — well, some Lynda Carter stories. (Pause) But I probably shouldn't. (Laughs) No, I better not. I'll just say that I enjoyed the character I played, Slick Callahan. The name was originally Bones Quinn, but I didn't like that name. I was pretty muscular back then because I was lifting weights and working out, so I thought the name Bones

Quinn didn't fit. I said, "How about Slick Callahan?" They said, "OK, but Marjoe's the one who's slick!" I said, "No, a slick is a derogatory name." So they decided to let me have it. (Laughs) Marjoe Gortner and I became friends on that film. He used to invite me to parties up at his place all the time.

SC: You had already worked with him on EARTHQUAKE.

Vint: That's right — one year before that, I think. My brother Alan and I played his neighbors in that film, the guys who are always harassing him because he's such a wimp. Alan gave the producers a difficult time — he didn't want anybody to recognize him doing that part, so he demanded to wear an Afro! (Laughs)



Jesse Vint in CENTENNIAL

SC: You mentioned Scott Wilson earlier...

Vint: Because Scott Wilson and I have always been confused for each other. Even his best friends have come running up to me — "Scott, where the hell have you been?" — and then they cock their heads left and right like parakeets looking at me. "Hey, you're not Scott!" This was happening all the time to Scott, too. Finally, we met in person. I walked into a bar down on Santa Monica Boulevard one night and everybody yelled out, "They're both here at the same time!" I didn't know what they were talking about until Scott Wilson walked up to me and stuck out his hand. "Scott Wilson!" I said, "Jesse Vint! Good to meet you after all these years." He said, "Yeah! Have any strangers been taking swings at you?" I said, "No," and he said, "Well, they've been swinging at me! What the hell have you been doing?" (Laughs)

SC: And then the two of you appeared together in ON THE LINE.

Vint: Right, a few years later. The producers asked me to play a border patrol chief. I said, "Sure. Who else is in the film?" They said, "David Carradine." I said, "Oh great, I've worked with Dave a couple times. Who else?" They said, "Scott Wilson." "Scott Wilson?" I

thought, "These guys — what the fuck are they doing? Casting me in a movie with Scott Wilson? Unless we play twin brothers, they're crazy." But I didn't say a word because I wanted the job! (Laughs) So when I got down there and met the director, he came over to me and said, "OK Scott, here's the first shot..." I said, "No, my name is Jesse Vint." "Jesse Vint? Oh my God! Are you aware that you look so much like Scott Wilson that he could be your brother?" I said, "Very much aware." He said, "Well, here's what we're going to do. I'm gonna put a border patrol hat on you and a large moustache. That way, the audience will be able to differentiate and there will be no confusion." (Laughs) So I became friendly with Scott, and we decided to switch wardrobes one day. We told everyone in the crew what

we were doing. I put on his bomber jacket and his jeans, he put on my border patrol hat and moustache, and we went down to the set. The director walked up to me and said, "OK, Scott, you're in the first shot. You come through the doorway..." and then he stopped and looked at me. He squinted. He said, "OK, as you come through the doorway, I want you to..." He stopped again. He was staring at me. "Y'know, it's amazing how much you look like..." He looked over at Scott, and then he looked back at me. He walked around in a circle, scratched his head, and then turned back to me and said, "Jesse Vint, goddamn it!" The crew just died laughing. (Laughs) And y'know who else I've been confused with? You're never gonna believe this — Dennis Hopper.

SC: You don't look like him at all!

Vint: Around 1982 or '83, I was up at Lake Tahoe — I had been skiing in Heavenly Valley, and I was with a beautiful girl. We went into the bar to have a few drinks, and this guy came up and introduced himself as the owner of the establishment. He said, "I think you're a wonderful actor. The drinks are on me." I said, "Well, that's very generous of you, sir! Thank you very much!" And every time I tried to buy drinks, he'd intercept and say "Oh no, not you, sir!" So I'd say, "I'm overwhelmed by your generosity, sir." Eventually I'd had five or six drinks, which is an extraordinary amount for me. I got to that point where I said, "Whoa, I better not have another one." So I thanked the owner — I mean, we'd had something like 12 drinks, which was probably well over a hundred bucks — and he said, "Would it be asking too much, sir, if I asked you for an autograph?" I said, "No, not at all." So he handed me a napkin, and I was getting ready to sign it when he said, "Y'know what movie I liked you in? EASY RIDER." And I froze. I thought,

"This fuckin' guy thinks I'm Dennis Hopper! And he has bought me over a hundred dollars worth of drinks. And if I tell him I'm not Dennis Hopper, am I gonna have to pay for those goddamn drinks? Or should I just sign Dennis Hopper's name, quietly make my escape, and nobody will ever know?" He said, "What's wrong?" I said, "Nothing, I was just thinking — I agree with you. It's a good movie." (Laughs) So I scribbled something nondescript on the napkin and handed it to him. He stared at it for the longest time, and then he looked up and said, "Thank you!" He got a thumbtack and stuck it up on the mantle behind the bar for everybody to see. I made my escape, and my date was so in awe of me because I was so famous that we were in the Jacuzzi five minutes later and I never told her! (Laughs) Dennis Hopper is reading a script of mine now. If anything happens with it, I'll have to thank him.

SC: Can you tell me more about that script?

Vint: It's called TRAPPED. It's kind of a surreal, quirky, dark, romantic comedy. Dennis Hopper's best friend gave him the script about a week ago, so I should be hearing from him one way or another very soon. I hope that he'll agree to do the lead. It's something I wrote and will insist on directing.

SC: What's your approach to scriptwriting?

Vint: I use the checkpoints from Robert McKee's structure — setting, inciting incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax, and resolution. I use those not to write something formulaic, but to put my idea into a form that I think will engage and grip the audience and intensify as things move forward. After I come up with a story idea, I write that idea and work it to death without allowing myself to write any dialogue whatsoever. Once you start writing dialogue, you go off on tangents. I try to be as pure as I can in regarding story and structure. I go over it and over it and over it, because it's far and away the most important thing. Anybody can write dialogue. It might not be good dialogue, but anybody can write it. I think Quentin Tarantino is the best dialogue writer around, and also Kenneth Lonergan, who wrote and directed *YOU CAN COUNT ON ME*, which really didn't have a story, but was still a remarkable film. For me, the hardest part of writing is getting the story. Once I get that right, it takes me between 12 and 14 days to write a first draft based on that synopsis.

SC: BLACK OAK CONSPIRACY was a screenplay that you rewrote?

Vint: Yes, that was Hugh Smith's story, and we both get credit for the script. I produced that film with Tom Clark, a friend of mine from Tulsa, Oklahoma. We raised the money in Tulsa and shot the film in Northern California for a little over \$300,000. We brought it in under schedule and under budget. There's a big difference between shooting in Los Angeles and going to small town America to shoot. The people in Los Angeles are used to filmmaking and they consider it a pain in the ass a lot of times — it slows down traffic, it holds everybody up — so they don't cooperate, and they try to negotiate everything they can. But if you go to small town America, everything is exactly the opposite. Everybody pours out and tries to help in whatever way they can, and they're all fascinated by it.

SC: You pulled together a fun group of actors for that film: Karen Carlson, Robert F. Lyons, Albert Salmi, James Gammon, Seymour Cassel...

Vint: I have to tell you a funny story about Seymour. This was during the days when he was a little out of control with his drinking. I was so happy that he was working with us on that film. He had been nominated for an Oscar, and he was quite the guy. He read the script, he liked it, and he was not working for much money. We were all flattered. One morning, we were all waiting for Seymour, freezing our asses off because the sun had just come up. Finally, somebody told me he was still at the motel. I said, "What?!" I got in my Dodge Charger and took off like a bullet, going like 95 miles an hour to the motel. I got there and started beating on the door to his room. Finally, he came to the door in his underwear, groggy, and I said, "Seymour, the entire cast and crew are waiting for you to get these shots. Get your clothes on right now!" He said, "Oh my God, I apologize! I'm so sorry!" I said, "NOW, Seymour! Quit apologizing and get your clothes on!" He said, "Do me a favor, will ya? Please go down to the coffee shop here in the motel and get me a cup of coffee." So I ran down there, ordered two cups of coffee, and when I ran back up to his room the door was shut and he was asleep! I started beating on the door but he wouldn't open it.

SC: How did you finally get him out of the room?

Vint: I had to threaten his life! I said, "Seymour, if I have to come through the window I'm gonna break you in half!" (Laughs) So I got him down to the location, and we had a stunt man doubling for him in one shot. I told the crew to go ahead and get that shot while I

was at the motel — we had to turn the schedule around and get that shot first and then Seymour's dialogue, rather than the other way around. Seymour saw the stunt man and said, "Who's that?" I said, "That's your stunt double for that shot of you jumping out of the car before it goes over the cliff." He said, "You gotta be kidding! Jess, this is outrageous! I do my own stunts! My agent knows, everybody knows, it's in my contract..." I said, "There's no such thing in your contract. There's no such thing in ANY actor's contract! I can afford to send the stunt man to the hospital, but not you, Seymour. Now let's get to the dialogue." He said, "No, I'm not moving." He hadn't sobered up yet. He was still drunk from the night before. "I've gotta do my stunt, Jess." So I said to the cameraman, "Look,

Jesse Vint in *BOBBIE JO AND THE OUTLAW*

just pretend we're rolling here. We're gonna have the car go two miles an hour so he can fall out, and then everybody applaud him and say he's a fuckin' hero so we can get his dialogue and get him out of here." So we did that. The car was going two miles an hour with somebody squashed down on the floor with their foot on the brake, and I yelled, "NOW, SEYMOUR!" He opened the door and fell out like a big flour sack hitting the ground. We said, "Jesus Christ, that's perfect! CUT! Print! You're a hell of a man, Seymour! I had no idea you such a great stunt man!" Everybody was applauding him, and Seymour was all smiles. So we got the dialogue scene out of the way, sent him back to his room, and then we did the real scene with the stunt man. I don't know if Seymour even knows we did that to him. I never told him. When he saw the movie, he said, "Look at me!" — elbowing his wife. (Laughs) Now, do I like Seymour? As well as any actor I've ever worked with. He's one of the most talented and interesting guys I've ever been around. He was a pain in the ass that day, but would I work with him again? In a heartbeat. He's a wonderful guy.

SC: I like BLACK OAK CONSPIRACY. There are some wonderful moments in it.

Vint: Well, it's good right up until the last ten minutes. The climax in the strip-mining pit is stupid. That's an argument that I lost because I walked away from it. Every time I've argued a point and then finally said, "OK, fine, we'll do it your way," it's been a mistake. I felt

that the conflict should come to a head, with a showdown between my character and the bad guy, but [director] Bob Kelljan said, "I think there might be too much violence if we do that." I said, "The character's not gonna go out there unarmed! Who goes to the big showdown without a gun?!" And he pulled one of these: "Jess, I've directed television shows for 30 years. What have you done? You're an actor, yeah — and you've written a little, yeah — but you don't know anything about story. Trust me on this." So I went along with it, and it didn't work.

SC: The scene is interesting visually, but it doesn't make much sense.

Vint: It makes no sense whatsoever! Our babysitter, this 16-year-old girl, said "I saw your movie! I really liked it — but how come you didn't take a gun with you at the end? That was pretty stupid, wasn't it?" I felt like picking up the phone and putting her on — "Here, talk to this guy. His name is Robert Kelljan." (Laughs) But because I was the co-writer, the co-producer, and the star of the film, I'm ultimately held accountable.

SC: And then Roger Corman stepped into the picture.

Vint: We produced the film, but Roger Corman was the guy we showed it to first. He released the film, and it played all over the world. It should've made me rich, but for some reason, it didn't. I'd have to say that Roger Corman made a lot more money off the film than I did.

SC: You were in a few of Corman's productions after that, including two with David Carradine.

Vint: I'd never met David before we did *FAST CHARLIE, THE MOONBEAM RIDER*. I'd heard a lot of not good things about him — that he had a chip on his shoulder and he liked to start fights. I was hot-tempered myself, and I liked to fight — I was boxing all the time — so I was quick on the trigger, too. I said, "If I get around David, the two of us are gonna get in a fight, and guess who's gonna get fired? Me." So I avoided him. Then, one day, we were filming a scene together when the sun suddenly went behind the clouds. The director said, "We're gonna have to wait a minute." They left David and I standing there next to each other while they waited for the sun to come out again! This was the first time I'd been alone with him, or even looked at him — I'd been on the show for two weeks — and he started talking and talking. He was so funny, so interesting, so intelligent, so knowledgeable — and he had me laughing so hard — that by the end of our conversation, I was really, really mad at myself for having prejudged him and not opened my heart to him right from the beginning. I realized then that I'd deprived myself of two weeks of good company.

SC: FAST CHARLIE was shot before DEATHSPORT but released after it?

Vint: It was shot first, I know that. They were shot around the same time, but I don't know which one came out first. That fuckin' *DEATHSPORT* could've been put together in an hour-and-a-half.

SC: Was DEATHSPORT one of your worst experiences on a film?

Vint: No, not by any stretch of the imagination. I knew it was a payday for me, and I knew it was David Carradine's contractual obligation to Roger Corman. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the contract that said Roger had to spend X-amount of money or make a quality film. It looks like he went out in his backyard and shot the damn thing. And using David's name, he was able to sell it all over the world. So he made it for

nothing and sold it for a lot. We all knew that's what was happening, but we knew there was nothing to fret about because nobody was going to see the movie anyway. In fact, *DEATHSPORT* was one of my best experiences because I met Claudia Jennings, and we were very, very close for about 5 or 6 months. Our relationship started on that film. I had another relationship that I was juggling at the time, and so did she, so we couldn't be too open about it.

SC: *I've heard that a lot of people who worked on DEATHSPORT didn't get along with Nick Niciphor, the first-timer Corman brought in to direct it.*

Vint: I got along with Nick — I never had a problem with him personally — but in his discussions, his mind kept going back to Vietnam. He would talk about the most grisly and gruesome things imaginable, and I could see that he was carrying a lot of baggage around with him. It was very difficult for him to relate to people, much less actors and actresses. You need to have very good people skills to be a director, and Nick was not good with people. Claudia was a trooper. She would do anything. If you said, "Get on that motorcycle going 60 miles an hour, and hit that jump" — even if she didn't know how to ride a motorcycle, she'd say, "OK." Nick was screaming at her one day, and I could hear it from my dressing room. I stepped out and heard some kind of commotion going on. By the time I got there, David Carradine had done one of his karate kicks and sent Nick flying through the air. So there was a big disruption, Nick was off the picture, and [Allan Arkush] had to come in and finish it.

SC: *What do you think of Roger Corman?*

Vint: Somebody asked me that during a Q&A session at a science-fiction convention, and I said, "He's the Earl Shive of the motion picture business." Everybody roared with laughter, and I never heard from Roger again! (Laughs) He called me at home and asked me if I wanted to do *FORBIDDEN WORLD*. He sent the script right over to me, I told him I'd do it for X-amount of money, and we did it. But he never called me again.

I guess he didn't like that Earl Shive comment, even though it's just about the best description I've ever heard of him! (Laughs) But the brilliant thing about Roger is that he uses eager kids just out of college who will lie down in the mud all day long if they have to for the film. They're talented, they never complain, and their enthusiasm is enormous. When I made *BLACK OAK CONSPIRACY*, I fell into the trap of using veterans who had been working in television forever. These guys, bar none — and I hate to say it, I know the union's got a lot of great people in it, and I'm a member of three unions myself — they had no enthusiasm for the project. They were only waiting to pick up their checks and get the hell home to figure out all the overtime and every other goddamn thing. I had an editor who turned out to be proficient at milking the system. He said, "I need severance pay." "Severance pay? For what?" After a while, I realized he was just a burden, drinking all day long. "I always get severance pay," I said. "This isn't a union job." "I don't care," he said. "You'll never put this film together without me because you won't be able to find the pieces." He was holding me hostage! He was the only person who knew what he'd done with the film — he had all this coded stuff set up in advance, which was one of the tricks he'd learned over the years. I had to pay severance pay, plus every other thing to bring in a new editor so he could locate all the pieces. I realized then why Roger Corman hires young people. Because they still love the business.

SC: *In FORBIDDEN WORLD, you were the pilot of the first spaceship constructed entirely out of Big Mac containers and egg cartons.*

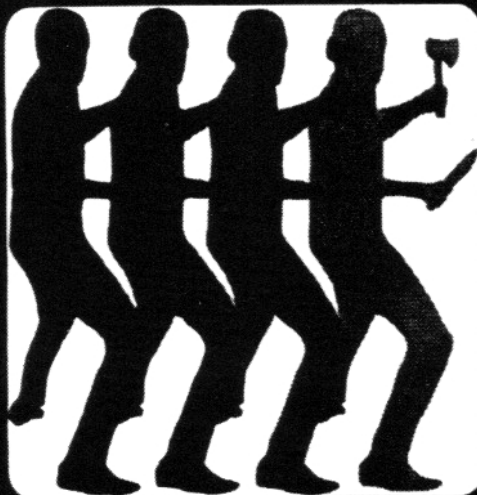
Vint: Oh yeah. I was pretty amazed when I walked through that set. "These are egg cartons!" They said, "Yup, that's what they are," as they were tacking them to the wall and spray-painting them silver. And whenever we turned a corner and went through another portion of the ship, we just walked down the hall again and all the egg cartons would be spray-painted gold. (Laughs) Oh, it's classic. No doubt about it.

SC: *You worked with Max Baer again on HOME-TOWN U.S.A., a comedy that you wrote and he directed. How did that project come about?*

Vint: Max had been looking for scripts for two years. He had a whole team of readers, every agent in town was sending him scripts, and he couldn't find one that he liked. I had written one about my teenage years, incorporating all the weird incidents and people and everything else, and it should've been directed in the style of *THE LAST PICTURE SHOW*. The events in the script actually happened, so the film should've been grounded in reality, with no forced humor whatsoever. Max read the script and was howling while he was reading it. This is one of the first lessons I learned — just because somebody reads your screenplay and loves it doesn't mean that you guys are on the same wavelength. He can be on a totally different wavelength than you, and that came as the shock of a lifetime to me. He began directing it as though were an episode of *THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES* — blacking people's teeth out, painting freckles on their faces, and having them act as though they had IQ's somewhere in the vicinity of room temperature. It was disheartening from day one, we were at odds by day five, and by day ten, I never wanted to see his face or hear his voice again for the rest of my life. He said, "You don't know what you're talking about! You're lucky that you got me to direct this film! I did comedy for nine years on *THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES*, blah blah blah." Well, the film just died, and it deserved to die because it was awful. I guess I was eager to get it made and flattered that somebody came along and said, "I love your screenplay."

SC: *Baer never made another feature after that.*

Vint: Max is nuts. At times, he can be very calm and reasonable. I just saw him being interviewed on a show about *THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES*, where he was chronicling the episodes, the show's growth, development, and all the drama behind the scenes, and I thought he was so intelligent and so reasonable and so sensible that / CONTINUED ON PAGE 47



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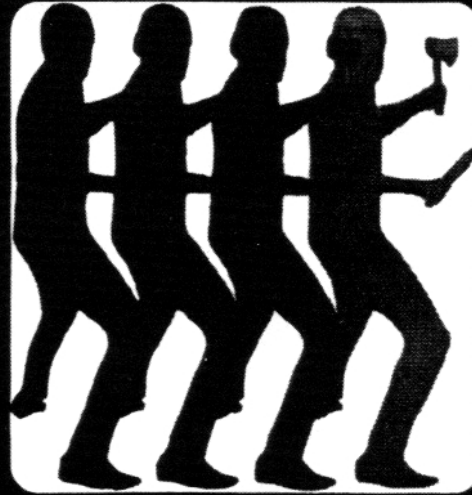
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FILM REVIEWS

WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS (Shocking Videos; 1972).

I've been searching for this movie for years, so I have to hand it to Mark Johnston at Shocking Videos, for being the first to unearth a copy. Long before the days of Rambo, this was one of the earliest and most exploitative psycho-Vietnam-vet flicks, fueled by a lovably-deviant cast of familiar drive-in faces. Directed by Richard Compton (MACON COUNTY LINE) and written by Guerdon Trueblood (THE CANDY SNATCHERS), it's a joyously crude gem that begins as a deceptively simple road movie — think EASY RIDER, with soldiers instead of stoners — but soon takes on a darker resonance.

Meet our quartet of ex-Green Berets, out of the jungle and back in the US. The original Buford Pusser himself, Joe Don Baker, stars as their leader Danny, who, along with Shooter (Paul Koslo), The Kid (Alan Vint) and Fatback (Elliott Street) are attempting to "re-adjust to civilian life." Of course, it's not easy when you've been as fucked up by warfare as these guys. Their plan is to stick together and start their own ranch, but first these horny (and potentially volatile) vets purchase a swanky Cadillac, head across country and take turns screwing a sexy pick-up (Jennifer Billingsley) in the back seat. But when she tries to rip them off, we learn just how quickly this group can get ugly.

It isn't until the group visits Danny's rural home town that we understand just how dislocated this foursome feels, and that there's no going home for these Soldier Boys. When their used car finally breaks down in some rural shithole, their pursuit of poontang lands 'em in jail, and after continually being ripped off and fucked around, something's gonna blow. Sure enough, all hell breaks loose in the final 15 minutes, as this dinkwad small town is handed their own devastating taste of war.

Except for Joe Don's visit with his family, there's little time for character development. Instead, the story relies on the actors' charisma, and with this cool bunch at the helm, we actually end up rooting for the vengeful vets (despite little social improprieties, like murder). In addition to the leads, there's able support from Billy "Green" Bush as a Sheriff, Geoffrey Lewis as a motel manager who orders up some local whores, and a soundtrack from a pre-NASHVILLE Ronee Blakley. Along the way, Compton succeeds at having it both ways — focusing on these returning warriors and their misguided dreams, while pouring on just enough sex 'n' violence to keep his slobbering viewers cheering.

I WANT TO GO HOME (ETC; 1989).

Without question, Alain Resnais is one of cinema's most insightful auteurs, with wide-ranging masterpieces such as LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD and LA GUERRE EST FINIE under his directorial belt. Well, this barely-released feature was an altogether different endeavor for the guy. Written by cartoonist Jules Feiffer and peppered with perplexing cast decisions, this is a four-star fiasco! A head-scratching debacle that proves *anyone* is capable of royally screwing up.

Laura Benson is at the center of this nonsense as Elsie, the daughter of an acclaimed cartoonist, who lives in France in order to avoid her dad. Veteran scriptwriter/composer Adolph Green (SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, ON THE TOWN) plays that ever-grumpy papa, Joey Wellman, who reluctantly accepts an invitation to a Paris comic convention, as an excuse to visit long-estranged Elsie. Of course, the moment the two meet, all of their old tensions re-erupt. Increasing the story's annoyance factor, both Joey (who hates France) and Elsie (who resents Dad) have imaginary animated confidants — Joey's is his famous feline creation Hepp Catt, while Elsie's is childhood pal Sally Catt — and each pops up in crude cartoon-balloons whenever they face some trivial crisis. Trust me, it's fucking painful.

A post-ALICE Linda Lavin turns up as Joey's girlfriend Lena, who's barely able to tolerate his grating personality, while Gerard Depardieu plays Elsie's womanizing

professor (who she has an inexplicable crush on). But Gerard is also a hardcore fan of Wellman's work, and eventually invites the old coot to a weekend at his mother's country estate, along with Geraldine Chaplin and John Ashton (BEVERLY HILLS COP) — with Elsie showing up as an uninvited guest. Its barely-there story culminates in an elaborate comic-character masquerade (with Lavin dressed up as Olive Oyl and Depardieu as Popeye), secret seductions, painful encounters, and even a huge knockdown brawl. Meanwhile, emotionally-estranged dad and daughter reconnect in the most inane and upbeat possible way.

Green might be talented in real life, but you'll want to kick his withered, impossibly-cantankerous character down a flight of steep stairs, as this Grumpy Old Tourist bitchches about his inability to understand the language, his daughter, his fans, life itself, and his desire to go back home. Sure, the scenario is unpredictable, but it's also totally uninvolved and stupid. Topped off with an unmemorable soundtrack by CABARET-composer John Kander, the film is visually drab, the actors seem (justifiably) confused, and its fantasy elements are intolerable. Honestly, it's impossible to believe that Resnais was actually at the helm. I'd prefer to think that he jumped ship just before production started and was anonymously replaced with Joel Schumacher. Somebody, dig a deep hole and give this stinkbomb a proper burial!

Danny, Shooter, Fatback and the Kid are carrying a deadly disease. War.



WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS

20th Century-Fox Presents A MARVIN SCHWARTZ PRODUCTION WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS
Starring JOE DON BAKER ALAN VINT PAUL KOSLO ELLIOTT STREET Produced by MARVIN SCHWARTZ
Directed by RICHARD COMPTON Written by GUERDON TRUEBLOOD Color by DE LUKE

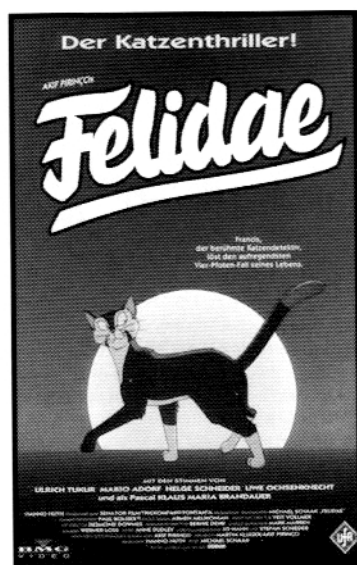
WHEN YOU COMIN BACK, RED RYDER? (Just For the Hell of It; 1979).

Here's another one of those M.I.A. titles. Based on an Obie Award-winning play by Mark Medoff (CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD), this screen adaptation was initially touted with full-page ads in major newspapers, but after its disastrous reviews and box-office, the movie vanished from sight. I'm not surprised, since this is a misguided, angry, sadistic, and ugly piece of work, featuring an oddball mix of character actors and Broadway vets — who were obviously deluded into thinking that they signed onto some brutal yet important 'statement'. Ha!

The time is 1968, with child-evangelist-turned-mediocre-actor Margoe Gortner (who also produced) playing Teddy, a long-haired, drug-dealing, Nam-vet scumbag. But it's Candy Clark who understands how to kick off a movie, during her full-frontal nude bath as Teddy's groovy girlfriend. Primarily set inside a desert roadside diner, we meet EQUUS-star Peter Firth as local greaser Stephen "Red" Ryder, who yearns to ditch this "hog trough"; Lee Grant and ex-BARNEY MILLER Hal Linden as a stressed-out city-couple on vacation; Pat Hingle, Bill McKinney and Audra Lindley are gristled locals; while newcomer Stephanie Faracy is big-boned waitress Angel (with Anne Ramsey as her mom). It's obvious that all of 'em have empty lives, and a wake up call is on its way.

Enter Gortner and Candy, who need a place to eat, a garage to fix their VW van, and a bunch of strangers to psychologically abuse at gunpoint. Teddy is the Psycho-Hippie From Hell, and quickly tears away at his hostages' emotional frailties. He tells chubby Angel that no one will ever marry her, wings Linden, threatens to smash Grant's pricey violin, and play-acts a Red Ryder western scenario (FYI, the movie's title comes from their dialogue), until they all reach a breaking point. Why? For the sheer kicks, as far as we can tell.

While this might sound powerful, director Milton Katselas undercuts it with deluded pretensions, gratingly-stupid characters, and even a gospel cameo by Hovie Lister and the Statesmen. Suffocatingly overwrought, the film's only saving grace is Margoe, who revels in this sweat-stained, Manson-wannabe — from being on the receiving end of a painful rectal search by a Customs official, to his lengthy diner stand-off. Neither sick enough to appease exploitation fans, or compelling enough for any average moviegoer, this self-important embarrassment deserves a spot next to other Gortner turds like STARCRAH and VIVA KNEVEL.

**FELIDAE (VSOM; 1994).**

A cartoon mystery starring felines who talk to each other? Don't cringe too quickly, because this German animated feature is a far cry from spineless kid-fare like *THE ARISTOCATS*. Based on the cult novel by Akif Pirincci and directed by Michael Schaack, it's an imaginative, disturbing and extremely adult thriller. Filled with red herrings and dark secrets, this hard-boiled tale avoids anthropomorphic creations (sorry, the cats don't walk upright and wear clothes), in favor of a naturalistic approach — which makes their twisted story even more engrossing. Though originally in German, this copy was English dubbed, but it seems like a fair translation.

Francis is an inquisitive tomcat, whose owner moves them to a new neighborhood. Learning that several area felines have been recently murdered, with their throats viciously shredded, Francis investigates, aided

by the tough, one-eyed Bluebeard. While these attacks are blamed on a "can opener" (their term for humans, since that's all we're good for), Francis suspects otherwise, amidst more kitty-corpses and bizarre twists — including a suicidal cat sect; a blind femme named Felicity; a secret graveyard; and videos of graphic cat-experimentation performed by a crazy scientist. And since these victims were all prowling for a specific female in heat, could this be a four-legged BASIC INSTINCT?

If this complex mystery weren't difficult enough, Francis also deals with vicious rival cats, and like any decent private eye, takes a time-out to shag a pussy who (literally) shoves her ass into his face. It all leads to a prophet named Felidae, the high priest Claudandus, a theme of "racial purity" (which is particularly potent, considering its German origins), and a climax that's both exciting and thought-provoking.

Let's not forget about the animation, which is outstanding. A rooftop chase, with dozens of cats in pursuit, puts Disney to shame; while Francis' violent nightmares provide the most outrageously surreal images since the golden age of Bakshi. The violence is particularly grisly at times (such as when a cat is found with its head ripped off), so by all means, round up any impressionable children and treat 'em to a matinee. It's no wonder that this beautifully cruel and tragic yarn never had a US release. In today's world of simple-minded cartoon-dreck, it never had a chance.

MONDO CANDIDO (Luminous; 1974).

During the golden age of the grindhouse, Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi were always gloriously pushing the envelope of exploitation, with classics like *MONDO CANE* and *FAREWELL UNCLE TOM*. Well, this is their most outlandish cinematic confection — a sexual-psychedelic comic-variation on Voltaire's *CANDIDE*, that transcends time and logic. Basic coherency might be at a minimum, but it's never boring!

Set in some nebulous medieval time, Christopher Brown stars as Candido, a free spirit who lives in a Baron's fabulous castle and prances about like Richard Simmons with a hamster up his ass. Taught that this is "the best of all possible worlds," Candido's gleeful routine is shattered when the Baron spots him face down in his chaste daughter Cunegonda's crotch and banishes the lad from his castle.

Suddenly, poor Candido is thrust into a cruel (and often anachronistic) land. He's "recruited" into an army that trains its soldiers to use their bare heads as battering rams, only to be slaughtered by modern troops with machine guns and flame throwers. He's later captured by the Inquisition, which turns into a tapestry of masked muscle-bound torturers, naked women led into a giant meat grinder, electric guitars, and a black dude being lynched by the KKK. It's like Ken Russell's *THE DEVILS* meets *LAUGH-IN*. Meanwhile, Candido pines for sweet Cunegonda, never realizing that she's now a happy slut who keeps four men satisfied, after she was captured by "demons" on motorcycles! Yow!

During its most clearly insane moment, Candido boards a ship to the New World (along with Marilyn Monroe and Al Capone?), and ends up in modern-day Manhattan! On the streets of NYC he meets his old mentor Pangloss, who's now directing TV commercials, while Cunegonda makes headlines with her orgasmic concerts. Eventually, he even heads to Ireland and Jerusalem — as once-naïve Candido finally sees this shitty world for what it really is.



Never prone to subtlety, the directors fill every frame with surreal twists, slapstick, sexuality, and repellent images. It's certainly not a happy, upbeat narrative, but they overflow it with dazzling sequences, plus a carnival-on-peyote atmosphere. The production is also surprisingly sumptuous, with excessive costumes, sets and props, dizzying photography by Giuseppe Ruzzolini (*TEORAMA*, *BURN!*), and a wild score by Riz Ortolani. A jaw-dropping tapestry of politics, bloodshed, fantasy, desire, death, and the human condition, it's an impossible-to-categorize, absurdist masterpiece from the demented genius of Jacopetti and Prosperi.

THE OWL SERVICE (1969).

Never shown in the US, this eight-episode (3-1/2 hour!) British TV-fantasy is fondly remembered in the UK. Originally telecast from 12/21/69 through 2/8/70, it's adapted from the award-winning 1967 children's book by Alan Garner (who also penned the teleplay) and centers around three teens who uncover a Celtic supernatural secret. But don't let its adolescent origins turn you off, because deeper themes and complex storytelling make it more intriguing, inventive and seductive than most of today's adult fantasy fare.

Teenaged Alison (Gillian Hills) and Roger (Francis Wallis) are recent step-siblings, and both end up on holiday in a remote valley in Wales. There they meet the housekeeper's son, Gwyn (Michael Holden), and the trio is complete. While investigating scratching noises in the attic, they discover a service of filthy old dishes, decorated with the abstract pattern of an owl. Allison becomes obsessed with these plates — to the point of tracing the pattern and building paper owls — and later moans in the night, as if possessed. The three also learn of an ancient legend, connected to the nearby Stone of Gronw, involving Blodeuwedd, a woman created from flowers, in order to be a wife; but when she's unfaithful, her new lover is killed and she's transformed into an owl.

The plot thickens when strange paintings are uncovered beneath crumbling plaster, noises emanate from behind padlocked doors, and Roger's photos of the Stone reveal ghosts from the past. As Gwyn and Alison become closer (even spending the night together in a garden hut), Roger's jealousy grows and betrayal is in the air, it becomes apparent that their fate is mysteriously mirroring that old legend — just as it has for past generations who stayed in this valley.

Although lacking extravagant trappings, the script never undercuts its dramatic elements, even if slower viewers might get confused by the dense plot (thank goodness for the sepia-toned, info-packed intros to each episode). Fueled by a deep sense of foreboding, the story drags during middle portions, but builds into a finale of revealed family secrets and attempted escapes from their fate. It's no wonder the program was initially criticized for being too adult for its target audience.

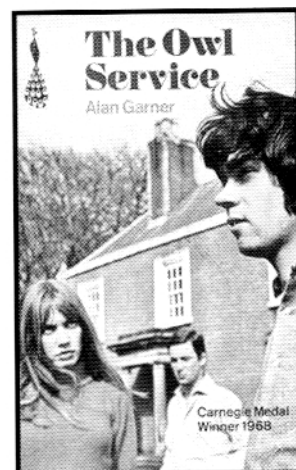
The male leads are adequate enough, but Gillian Hills (who earlier proved her 'adulthood' as one of *BLOW-UP*'s nude models) gives it an unexpected eroticism — which has both boys drooling over this redhead, and her fondness for mini-skirts and bikinis. Director Peter Plummer maintains a sophisticated veneer, from expressive camerawork and locales to the sly color scheme for each teen: Gwyn (black), Roger (green) and Alison (of course, red). It's a striking example of how to make a literate, character-driven mystery that doesn't condescend to young viewers, yet is smart enough to keep old farts (like myself) intrigued.

KENNY & COMPANY (Video Junkie; 1976).

Any self-respecting horror fan is familiar with director Don Coscarelli's *PHANTASM* franchise (and has probably bitched about their rapidly declining quality). But few have seen his pre-Tall Man efforts, since they're ostensibly low-budget kids' films. Following his freshman effort, *JIM, THE WORLD'S GREATEST*, Coscarelli's follow-up was a crude but likeable suburban romp centered around some 12-year-old kids.

Narrated by 7th-grader Kenny (Dan McCann), his best pal is the wise-assed Doug (future *PHANTASM*-star Michael Baldwin), and the rambling script chronicles their low-grade adventures. They skateboard, try out phone pranks and ogle a *Playboy* centerfold, even as Kenny copes with his crush on a blonde schoolbabe (Terrie Kalbus, the fortune teller's daughter in *PHANTASM*). It all culminates on Halloween night, with some spooky and silly door-to-door encounters, topped off by a run through creepy old Miss Walker's house.

On the surface, this is pretty vapid fare, but try to ignore that initial "Why the fuck am I watching this shit?" response. Give it time and you'll discover an



underlying honesty and sadistic humor (such as when they convince klutzy Sherman to stick his hand in a mouse trap). Although a few of their shenanigans are sitcom-foolish, Coscarelli earns points for showing just how screwed up it is to be a kid — such as dealing with the death of a beloved pet. While these near-teens can be li'l assholes (particularly Doug), I appreciated that there's no heavy moral bullshit attached to their actions, unlike most Hollywood slop. And like the first PHANTASM, the script understands just how stupid adults really are, and that any advice from them should be promptly ignored.

Though amateurs, all of the juveniles are believable, and Reggie Bannister even turns up as Kenny's cool teacher Mr. D! Meanwhile, its vision of '70s suburbia crept me out, since it accurately captures that era's furnishings, fashions and lifestyle, right down to the ugly t-shirts and shaggy haircuts. Though only 22-years-old, Coscarelli handled the film's writing, directing, producing, cinematography, and editing (when did he have time to take a leisurely dump? In his sleep?), and creates a surprisingly ingratiating slice of life, for anyone who remembers schoolyard fears, hoping to get the best of a local bully, or their first broken heart.

A COLD WIND IN AUGUST (Shocking Videos; 1961).

A young working class stud falls for a horny older dame in this seedy b&w gem, from the days when sex was still dirty and respectable folks slept in twin beds. A camp classic that's just waiting to be rediscovered, the story (scripted and based on the novel by Burton Wohl) reeks with sleazy, swingin' drama, while director Alexander Singer (who worked with Kubrick on his earliest films) creates a delectable mix of sexual tension, laughable double entendres, hip dialogue, and teen angst.

Lola Albright stars as Iris, a high-class stripper who's spending her summer break in New York City. Meanwhile, THE COOL AND THE CRAZY's Scott Marlowe is Vito Perugino, a handsome street kid who helps out with his pop's janitorial duties. His latest job is to repair the air conditioning in Iris' apartment, and this 17-year-old goes all squishy in her sultry presence. You see, Vito wants the type of love that the neighborhood girls aren't willing to give, and since his mother died early, he's also drawn to older women. On the other hand, Iris is your basic nymphomaniac, so she's instantly wet over this future teen conquest and quickly baits her trap. She lures in naive Vito with a bloody mary (horrors!), and after only half a glass, this liquor lightweight becomes the love pawn of a 28-year-old slut. How scandalous!

As romance blooms between these misfits, their 'Forbidden Love' has genuine intensity and a welcome playfulness. But while round-heeled Iris knows these sexual ropes, it's tearing poor Vito apart. First, he asks her to "go steady" as they lay in bed, and soon, jealousy and darker desires kick in (particularly after he spots her

...if you care about love,
...you'll talk about

Lola Albright
Scott Marlowe

...a teen-age boy and a woman
who is all allure, all tenderness...
with too much experience

A Cold Wind in August

CO-STARRING
Joe De Santis / Herschel Bernardi
SCREENPLAY BY PRODUCED BY
Burton Wohl / Phillip Hazelton
DIRECTED BY
Alexander Singer
A TROY FILMS PRODUCTION



buys baby clothes and redecorates). Convinced that his life is over and increasingly obsessed with obtaining a handgun, when Leo finally cracks, all hell breaks loose — from violent beatings to a torturous kidnapping.

Filled with uncontrollable personal pain, these male characters are so flawed that they can only truly exist within their tight-knit, twisted circle. In the process, Refn flaunts his fondness for bizarre cinema, from Lenny's ultra-cool video store to their Tarantino-esque arguments about movies — such as who's better, Fred Williamson or Steven Seagal (I know, it's a no-brainer). But this is no dweeby melodrama, because Refn has a more pertinent agenda. Shifting gears unexpectedly, and never allowing his gritty style and impressive widescreen compositions to overshadow the dramatic elements, this is a caustic, suspenseful (and in the end, oddly upbeat) gem that wanders down the grimmest side streets of human fear and desire.

ROAD / CHRISTINE / ELEPHANT (1987 / 87 / 89).

Though most of his work remains unforgivably unseen in the US, Alan Clarke is one of my favorite British directors. In a career spanning three theatrical features and 65 TV-productions, he rocked audiences with such distinctively volatile masterpieces as MADE IN BRITAIN (with Tim Roth) and Gary Oldman's THE FIRM. This trio of short, experimental works were amongst his last efforts, before his death in 1990 from lung cancer. Steeped in despair, drugs and death, they're just as breathtaking today, over a decade later.

In ROAD, Clarke hauls the viewer into a stylish but uncompromising vision of Thatcher's England at its most hopeless. Set in a Northern housing project, ripe with unemployment, the hour-long production presents a tableau of desperate characters. A middle-aged man reminisces about better days, long gone; a wife rants about her husband; and a woman tries to seduce a young soldier who's so drunk that he's vomiting in the street. Many of their monologues are spoken as characters walk down long, barren sections of their project, and several converge at a local dance hall, where Louise (Jane Horrocks, in her film debut) and her friend Carol (Mossie Smith) pick up a couple blokes, who take these birds back to a boarded-up squat, with unexpectedly soul-searching results.

Originally written for the stage by Jim Cartwright (who later penned LITTLE VOICE for Horrocks), the characters reek of kitchen-sink realism, even as

Clarke's approach often skews a naturalistic style. The ensemble cast is superb, there's heartrending use of "Try a Little Tenderness," and as one character describes life, "It's like walking through meat in high heels." Indeed, these characters are poor, without any foreseeable future, and are ready to explode (or self-destruct) at any moment. Their resignation to this fate makes their stories all the more indelible.

I've reviewed a lot of drugged-out flicks — from the kitschy to the painfully misguided — but Clarke's 51-minute CHRISTINE is the real deal, and delivers a quietly scalding portrait of teen junkies. Vicky Murdock stars as Christine, a typical suburban 13-year-old who arrives home and nonchalantly mainlines a needle full of smack, as we then follow this girl on her daily routine of trudging about her quiet neighborhood and delivering heroin to school pals, while their parents are at work. Lugging her shopping bag full of drugs and getting high at any opportunity, Christine and her stoned friends discuss normal teen topics, like a party they're planning for the weekend (but they're always too fucked up to follow through on).

These are average kids, living their average junkie lifestyle, and treating it as common as you would a pizza delivery. Mind you, this is no preachy "drugs are evil" tirade. The film's power comes less from watching them shoot up on their sunny living room couches, than from Clarke's deliberate pacing, long silences and lack of soundtrack music, which

performing a burlesque gig in Newark). But the tables are ultimately turned on Iris, who finds herself obsessed for a change and pining for her "baby."

Over-ripe and rarely subtle, both Albright and Marlowe give this tawdry material a surprising emotional weight, complemented by Joe DeSantis as Vito's dad and Herschel Bernardi as a traveling salesman who's one of Iris' ex-clients. Although constricted by 1961-era censors, there are plenty of racy touches, and Albright is definitely up to the task of professional tease. Inventively-lensed by longtime AIP cameraman Floyd Crosby (THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM), this is a cradle-robbing epic, small in scale but drenched in outstanding performances and lovably overwrought repercussions.

BLEEDER (European Trash Cinema; 2000).

Writer-director Nicolas Winding Refn's first feature, PUSHER, was an explosive Danish junkie-drama, and his sophomore effort is even more accomplished and powerful. Stylishly constructed, this increasingly dark and demented tale is steeped in loneliness, despair, romance, and sudden, unflinching violence. It ain't the feel-good movie of the year, but it's certainly one of the most memorable.

Lenny (Mads Mikkelsen) is a quiet film-geek who mans the counter at an eccentric video store, while secretly lusting after lovely Lea (Liv Corfixen) who works at a nearby diner. But Lenny's such an oddball that he's unable to find the courage to simply ask her out, and instead fumbles through painfully inane conversations with her. Even when he finds the courage to ask her to the movies, Lenny is so dysfunctional that he stands her up. Ironically, she knows little about movies, and instead fills her empty days by ravenously reading books.

Lenny's pal Leo (Kim Bodnia) is also a film fanatic, but with an entirely different set of problems. His girlfriend Louise is pregnant, and he's dangerously freaking out at the thought of fatherhood (even as she happily

fills her empty days by ravenously reading books. Lenny's pal Leo (Kim Bodnia) is also a film fanatic, but with an entirely different set of problems. His girlfriend Louise is pregnant, and he's dangerously freaking out at the thought of fatherhood (even as she happily

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give us time to examine these lost characters. Murdock is both disquieting and moving, the supporting cast is unmannered, and there's never a false moment or a whiff of condemnation. It's simply a clear-eyed, caustic vision, eliciting less shock than overwhelming despair.

For the Belfast-lensed ELEPHANT, Clarke was at the top of his craft, offering a jarring vision of violence and murder. Only 37-minutes long, there's no plot or dialogue, just a series of unflinchingly brutal vignettes which recreate 18 murders in Northern Ireland. The locations differ — hotel rooms, gas stations, restaurants, courtyards, and even soccer fields — as Clarke's Steadicam silently glides alongside the killers, or sometimes the victims, until the scene erupts with a remorseless efficient execution. Each death is then punctuated with a lingering shot of the corpse, as the reality of the situation strikes home.

Full of bleak locales and bloody crime scenes, we're never told who these people are, or why the murders occur. They simply do. The subject matter is raw, but Clarke's filmmaking is sleek and suspenseful, with a documentary-style edginess and grim inevitability. Produced by TRAINSPOTTING's Danny Boyle, the film's title is taken from writer Bernard MacLaverty's comment that the Troubles were like having an elephant in your living room, and in bringing Northern Ireland's turmoil to the screen, Clarke created one of his most unforgettable visions.

**TRIBULATION (2000).**

Years ago, when I first reviewed lead-en Christian propaganda like Mark IV's Rapture quartet, who could've guessed that this type of hokum would resurrect itself with big-screen feces like **THE OMEGA CODE?** Fueled by out-of-work marquee value, the most grating new releases are from the Jack Van Impe Ministries. This is the third entry in their Apocalypse franchise, and for such a Heavenly production, it features a cast from Hell, topped by Hollywood screw-ups Gary Busey and Margot Kidder, plus terminal annoyance Howie Mandel.

Busey plays a religion-skeptical cop, Kidder is his irritating, Bible-thumping sis, Mandel grows a goatee in order to look professorial as Busey's nut-job brother-in-law, while Nick Mancuso returns as false-messiah Franco Macalouso. This evil leader of "One Nation Earth" is planning a global catastrophe, and uses long-distance mind control to turn average family men into murderous, Bible-hating kamikazes for Satan.

One lengthy coma later, Busey awakens to a post-Rapture police state run by Macalouso's minions, who track down all rebels (dubbed "Haters"), even as menacing Mancuso appears via high-tech virtual reality goggles and forces humans to pledge their allegiance to his devilish reign. So Busey's choice is to convert and accept the Mark of the Beast (an ever-so-subtle '666' on the back of your hand) or run to save his soul! Though Busey's own brother turns Judas on him, Mandel finally shows him how to find both his missing wife and God's Eternal Love. [Insert sound of someone puking on their shoes.]

Throughout, Busey seems confused (as if his synapses aren't sparking the way they used to) and since the guy is approaching Orson Wellesian girth, he isn't the most realistic action hero. Kidder looks so bad that we never question that the older Busey is playing her substantially younger brother, and Mandel gets the majority of the scenery-chewing, as he changes from spineless lunatic to religious convert who tosses away his once-trusty crystal! Although director Andre van Heerden and writers Peter and Paul LaLonde have a modicum of filmmaking savvy, this bland effort is afraid to take genuine risks, unlike the old Christian flicks which hammered home their Bible bombast with a endearingly rabid zeal.

At least it's better than the insipid **LEFT BEHIND (2000)**, starring ex-GROWING PAINS shitstain Kirk Cameron. Based on a self-proclaimed "best seller," Kirk is Buck Williams, a short, aging, ex-child star, er...reporter who discovers a hellish conspiracy linked to a false messiah and the Apocalypse. When the Rapture occurs (POOF!) and all of the Jesus-freaks are whisked to Heaven, the world is left to all of us fucked-up heathens. International slimebag Nicolae Carpathia blames these vanishings on nuclear radiation, and soon, it's the rise of that pesky Anti-Christ!

It's difficult to imagine Cameron as a hard-edged newsman (since he's more of a retarded Jimmy Olsen type), but Buck is eventually on the run from assassins, as he closes in on the truth. Granite-jawed Brad Johnson co-stars as a randy airline pilot who loses his insufferable Christian wife and goes God-loopy, and Kirk's real-life spouse Chelsea Noble is a bimbo stewardess who's a traitor to God. Despite impressive production values, director Vic Sarin delivers little more than a vapid chunk of horseshit best suited to Pax-TV. In fact, my favorite part was its trailer for the upcoming **JUDGMENT**, starring Mr. T!

QUIET DAYS IN CLICHY (ETC; 1970).

Henry Miller's classic novel is the springboard for this joyous Danish sex-romp, packed with a breezy softcore decadence, beautiful women, comic absurdity, and a little thoughtful insight. It's even more impressive nowadays, since its freewheeling sexuality is so rare amongst today's formulaic masturbatory fare. Although the book was set in pre-WWII France, this is definitely a product of the groovy, liberated late-'60s, complete with an audacious soundtrack by Country Joe McDonald, whose toe-tapping title tune introduces us to womanizers Carl and Joey, as well as "The girls they fucked and the women they laid./ This is the story of the love they made."

The episodic story centers on a balding American named Joey (Paul Valjean) and his Parisian roomie Carl (Wayne John Rodda), who're both hellbent on carefree sex during a time "when

cunt was in the air." Accompanied by Country Joe's story-spinning lyrics, they haul every horny gal in the city back to their place, while freshman writer-director Jens Jorgen Thorsen (**WET DREAMS**) keeps it imaginatively lensed. Of course, screwing has its downside when you're strapped for cash, such as when Joey picks up a cutie named Nys (Ulla Lemvig Müller) and ends up penniless, as he roams the streets hungry and imagines this tease feasting on his money.

One night, Carl brings home a jailbait street urchin named Colette (Elsebeth Reingaard) and lets this well-built waif stay in their bachelor pad. Soon, lollipop-sucking Colette is driving Carl crazy with lust, while Joey is equally obsessed with money-hungry Nys. The minimal story is often too dreamy for its own good, but its flamboyant atmosphere keeps it on track — including smoky nightclubs, a bathtub threesome, a manipulative whore, a blonde bombshell, and a trip to Luxembourg that's captured in a series of still photos.

The striking (and often experimental) b&w cinematography adds a vintage sensuality to the schtupping, and the young women (unlike today's skeletal, siliconed starlets) stink of genuine eroticism. Throughout it all, Thorsen lets his playful side show, while the often contemplative story transcends its simple sexploitation trappings. Unapologetically unromantic, and steeped in regret and loneliness, there are plenty of naked chicks for the raincoat crowd, but it's also smarter, funnier and more innovative than you'd expect. It's a spectacular blast from the past.

WIDE OPEN [Sangkamrater] / SMOKE (Shocking Videos; 1975 / 1971).

Here's a double dose of Swedish exploitation, both featuring appearances by **THEY CALL HER ONE-EYE** bombshell Christina Lindberg. First up is **WIDE OPEN**, a drab English-dubbed tale with no shortage of nudity from its comely female cast. Kent-Arne Dahlgren plays Stockholm taxi driver Paul, who screws every gorgeous gal he can. Luckily, live-in girlfriend Marianne (pneumatic Solveig Andersson) is a free-thinking chick and isn't irked by his whoring. In addition, Marianne's sis Beryl (Gunilla Larsson) ends up in bed with the couple. Paul's drunken father crashes on their couch and Marianne's uptight parents pay a surprise visit.

Christina turns up the heat as Eva, a wide-eyed lass who works as a nude model and helps Beryl unleash her sexuality. But when scantily-dressed Beryl is accidentally locked out of Eva's apartment, she's rescued by an old pervert, who takes her home and suddenly whips her. During her topless escape, Beryl grabs a jacket containing a hidden cache of dope, and that's when the plot gets contrived! Soon criminals are searching for Beryl and her coat, cabbie Paul just happens to pick up the thug looking for her, and Beryl encounters her creepy WhipMaster at a strip party. When Paul and the three horny ladies visit a secluded farmhouse, each wants him at the same time, as the criminal elements take a dopey comic turn.

Though her role is minimal, Christina again makes all of today's sad excuses for sex symbols look like anorexic young boys, amidst bishop-flogging moments such as nude vacuuming and answering the door in a see-thru negligee. Writer-director Gustav Wiklund (who also directed Lindberg in 1971's **EXPOSERAD**) knows what his audience wants — everyone trying to seduce everyone else — and delivers it, at the expense of any noticeable intelligence.

No question, **SMOKE** is the more eccentric affair. A Swedish rebel hippie-flick, it stars Lee Hazlewood, the US singer-songwriter who penned classics like "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'", before moving to Sweden in the early-'70s. Directed by Torbjörn Axelman (who helmed Hazlewood's 1970 special **COWBOY IN SWEDEN**), Lee — who also co-scripted and wrote the score — stars as Smoke, a hang-dog American with a Sonny Bono haircut, living in a laid-back commune.

Smoke's wealthy boss, Olof (Frank Sundström) is pissed that his sexy daughter Annika (Cla Löwgren) is hanging out with this creep and his anti-capitalist pals, who have live chickens roaming through the bedrooms. Olof fears that she's stoned, but Smoke (who looks like a live-action Droopy the Dog) knows "The only thing she's addicted to is love." I'm not surprised that this film is obscure, since most of it's devoted to their dull counterculture lifestyle, as they lay about, dance, gab, and cook (with Smoke tossing a joint into their pot of stew), and the best thing about it is Hazlewood's soundtrack snippets. Meanwhile, lovely Lindberg is 5th-billed as "little orphan Annie," a dim cutie who's invited into their household, gets mocked by her bleary roommates and sleeps on the floor with her shaggy sheepdog. It's not much of a role.

The plot finally picks up when these hairball revolutionaries break into a power plant and black-out the city. Later, when Olof tries to buy off Smoke, our title oddball spends the bribe money on guns! Smoke's more radical pals then begin killing people who annoy them and it all ends in a tragic confrontation with a battalion of cops. It's not the most upbeat portrait of social rebellion, but Hazlewood is a hoot. Self-effacing and overflowing with half-baked philosophy, this is a hilariously-heavy vanity production with pretensions to spare.



An Evergreen Film presented by Grove Press.

Henry Miller's Quiet Days in Clichy

(Clichy)

With music composed and sung by Country Joe McDonald

Persons under 18 not admitted.

STAKEOUT ON DOPE STREET (1958).

Less campy than you might expect from its lurid title and premise, this cheap but hard-boiled drug-noir expertly combines crime, cops, troubled teens, no nonsense performances, and two pounds of missing heroin. Directed by Irwin Kershner, its streetwise edge is a far cry from later gigs like *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, and is closer to the gritty realism of TV's *NAKED CITY* (which Kershner worked on during his early years).

Nick (Morris Miller), Ves (LITTLE SHOP OF HORROR's Jonathan Haze) and Jimmy (Yale Wexler, Haskell's younger brother) are three slow-witted pals, who stumble upon a lost cache of dope that went M.I.A. after a police showdown with the mob. Thinking it's just "face powder," these greaser Einsteins toss it into the trash, but when they realize that a fortune has slipped through their fingers, they retrieve it from the city dump and decide to sell it themselves. In additional storylines, the local crime syndicate is trying to track down their missing smack, while the fuzz are scouring the streets with DRAGNET-like charm and efficiency.

Again proving their superior intellect, the trio recruit the help of a brain-fried hop-head (Allen Kramer). And the instant they have some cash, they blow it on expensive jewelry and test driving a Jaguar, because there's no sense keeping a low profile when you're peddling dope and have the mob after you, right? Soon these old friends will be at each others' throats, due to the usual combo of greed and stupidity, and by the end of this depressing scenario, they'll all regret their decisions.

Abby Dalton co-stars as Jimmy's straight-laced girlfriend, who first worries that her artist-beau won't be able to support her — but then complains when he finds an illegal way to keep her rolling in dough. Hey, make up your mind, lady! The script might be laced with the same old 'evil narcotics' diatribes, but Kershner brings more directorial finesse to this B-movie material than it probably deserves. And unlike so many drug-themed productions, which never ring true, he sneaks in some authentically cool moments, such as a dope fiend's dilapidated shanty and a wonderfully hallucinogenic withdrawal. It's fast-paced, lovably sordid fun.

URINE: GOOD HEALTH (1999).

Here's something you don't see everyday. An instructional video about drinking piss! No, this isn't a fetish flick (though I'd have more respect for it, if it was). Instead, director Eli Kabillio (who's also responsible for 1998's trepanation flick *A HOLE IN HEAD*, which recommends you drill a hole in your own skull!) tries to convince us that pee is therapeutic. Whether you drink it, snort it, bathe in it, put it in your eyes, or use it for an enema, Urine Therapy is the wave of the future!

Told with a frighteningly straight face, this asinine hour-long video documents the history of urine's medicinal powers, including Jesus advocating piss-drinking in the Bible (I guess they skipped that passage in Sunday School). Meanwhile, kooks, er...experts promise that our "Water of Life" will miraculously heal everything from the flu and shingles, to cancer and AIDS. For every interviewee who attempts to make a logical argument for their golden beverage of choice, there are twice as many nitwits — from Holistic hysters who're making a buck off this hooey, to one cretin who injects fresh urine and rants about medical company conspiracies. Most have the same obsessed, glassy-eyed look as those tabloid-TV morons who've seen the Virgin Mary in a mildew stain on their shower curtain. One of them even admits to being a NYC Fire Department Captain, and I can't wait until his colleagues see this video and finally realize why the coffee tastes odd whenever the Captain makes it.

At least Kabillio includes a few legit physicians, who explain how dumb the idea is (undoubtedly, so the filmmakers won't be liable for future lawsuits). In fact, the film's only interesting off-shoot is a visit to a porta-john company that processes its products' waste materials for enzyme experimentation. And don't forget to jot down important advice, such as when visiting a country with a lot of diseases, you should ask your bellhop if you can drink some of his piss! Or that fresh urine "doesn't taste as bad as people think." You know, I'll have to take their word on that one.

CANNABIS (Video Search of Miami; 1970).

Serge Gainsbourg was certainly a controversial figure within France's music scene — from his suggestive songs to his randy lifestyle — and he also dabbled in the cinema. Best known for directing the over-ripe *JE T'AIME MOI NON PLUS*, he also starred in this crime 'n' romance caper, alongside current squeeze Jane Birkin. Serge provides the score, the cinematography is by legendary Willy Kurant (who shot films for Godard, Pliat and Skolimowski, as well as slop like *TUFF TURF*), but director Pierre Koralnik brings little flavor to its crude gangster shenanigans.

Serge stars as a world-weary American hitman, sent to Paris by his bosses to investigate a competitor's drug business. The moment he arrives, he's abducted by thugs, gets shot, but manages to escape. Calling upon the help of a young gal



(Birkin) he met during his flight, she takes Serge back to her palatial pad, and after he's bandaged up, this naked minx leaps into bed with him. Ahh, only in France! Meanwhile, '70s UK singing sensation Paul Nicholas makes his film debut as Serge's shaggy-haired partner, and his bell-bottomed, health-food-fanatic, peeping-tom, hippie hitman is the only thing that keeps this EuroDreck lively.

As Serge and Paul search the city for this other crime syndicate (led by wealthy slimebag Curd Jürgens) and their drug stash, there's a shoot-out in a drag nightclub and they roust an apartment full of stoners. But the highlight is their machine-gun-armed siege on a drug lab, located inside a cacophonous live chicken plant! When Serge isn't slaughtering Frogland mobsters, he dreams of running away with Birkin and all of his ridiculous criminal connections.

Trenchcoated Serge obviously wants to be a French Bogart, but instead has all the charisma of an unshaven Bob Denver. Still, that doesn't stop 23-year-old Birkin from stripping down and humping the guy at every opportunity — even pausing for a quick schtupp while they're running for their lives! Despite exotic locales, the plot is slim, the tone is overbaked, and while it strives to have the same smoky, seedy veneer as Serge's music, his songs last only three minutes, while this low-energy yarn is 30 times as long. It's best reserved for hardcore Gainsbourg fans (or anyone with a hard-on for Ms. Birkin).

LA PRISONNIÈRE (Luminous; 1968).

Director Henri-Georges Clouzot is best known for '50s imports such as *THE WAGES OF FEAR* and *DIABOLIQUE*, but this — his final feature — is a very different outing for the respected French filmmaker.

You see, it was now the groovy, decadent '60s, and the 61-year-old Clouzot obviously felt the need to stockpile this psychological drama with plenty of flesh and low-grade kinkiness. Unfortunately, it takes more than trendy surface trappings to cover up a slow-paced and predictable story.

Sexy Elizabeth Wiener stars as Jose, the live-in girlfriend of eccentric sculptor Gilbert Moreau (Bernard Fresson), whose 'artwork' (I use the term loosely) consists of revolving cubes. When Jose catches her boyfriend romancing a female art critic at a Paris opening, she decides to take off with the gallery's seemingly-reserved owner, Stanislas (Laurent Terzieff). Once back at his place, she soon realizes that the guy's actually a closet pervert, who's into taking pix of submissive women.

As Jose becomes increasingly pissed-off at beau Moreau, she's more attracted to Stan and his erotic hobby — initially just as a voyeur, she becomes noticeably aroused while watching one of his nude photo sessions. Stan is also a master of manipulation, and soon she's under his smooth-talking spell and is reduced to a puppet (while in a sledgehammer-ironic subplot, Jose's day job has her editing a documentary about submissive, abused women). Jose mistakes this for love, while unpassionate Stan wants nothing of that icky emotion, so when a more 'normal' romance threatens to bloom between the two at a seaside hotel, the finale detonates with an wild blast of repressed rage, jealousy, self-destruction, and fabulously tripped-out visuals.



Clouzot attempts to elevate his sleazy material by having his screwy characters intelligently discuss the deeper aspects and art of sadomasochism — before they take out the dog collars, that is. It doesn't hold up, and only the wildly chaotic ending keeps your attention. Still, it's beautifully shot by Andreas Winding, and awash in ultra-chic trappings, particularly Stan's eye-roasting gallery of 'kinetic' art. Nowadays, it's less shocking than quaintly fetishistic, and never seems to realize just how shallow and naive it is at its core.

THE NIGHT CHILD [a.k.a. The Cursed Medallion] (European Trash Cinema; 1975).

Tossed onto the US drive-in circuit, this Italian possession pabulum features some familiar faces, yet promises more thrills than it ever comes close to delivering. Directed by Max Dallamano (WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO SOLANGE?) and photographed by Franco Delli Colli (THE LAST MAN ON EARTH, ZEDER), it's no lost classic. In fact, it's barely more competent than most of today's impotent horror fare.

Perpetually intense Richard Johnson (ZOMBIE, BEYOND THE DOOR, SCREAMERS, et cetera) stars as British documentary filmmaker Michael Williams. Nicoletta Elmi co-stars as his sweet young daughter Emily, who's been diagnosed with repeated "nervous breakdowns," following her mom's flaming demise. Since logic is at a minimum, her quack physician advises Williams to pull his daughter out of her stable London environment and haul her to Italy, where he's researching his latest project on "Diabolical Art." Now there's a fun vacation for a sick kid!

An always-sultry, pre-BLADE RUNNER Joanna Cassidy co-stars as Williams' new American assistant, who joins the family and arouses Johnson's Johnson (as well as Emily's jealousy). When Emily is given a medallion belonging to her dead mother, she begins to exhibit odd behavior (like trying to kill her nanny!), but these far-from-subtle warning signs are simply ignored. Instead, Williams becomes obsessed with one old painting, that touches something deep within; even as Lila Kedrova warns him of the consequences. Sure enough, Williams' footage of this painting has a weird 'ghost,' a statue nearly crushes him, and Emily is driven to kill by her dime-store pendant.

Like most Pastaland horror, the film is thick with brooding atmosphere and cheap (unintentional) laughs, but it's also never enjoyable enough to overcome its ill-plotted story and a disappointing finale that leaves you wanting a lot more bang for your buck. Johnson scowls on auto-pilot, Cassidy deserves better material (though her sex scenes are unquestionably alluring) and Elmi, like far too many disposable child actors, needs to be locked in a closet. Though only 89-minutes long, this is a hit-and-miss, leisurely paced chunk of generic supernatural hijinx.



FORCED ENTRY (Video Junkie; 1975).

First off, no, it's not the Harry Reems porno flick (reviewed back in SC#11), although this R-rated trash follows the same misogynistic territory. Directed by Jim Sotos (a/k/a Dimitri Sotirakis), and lensed in 1975 as THE LAST VICTIM, this New Jersey serial killer flick was finally dumped into grindhouses in March 1984, after its lead actress, Tanya Roberts, landed a gig as one of CHARLEY'S ANGELS. This was her first film, and I'm sure she's very proud it's still in circulation.

In a role echoing Tanya's current gig on THAT 70'S SHOW, she plays a '70s suburban mom with two adolescent kids (despite being only 21-years-old at the time). While dropping off her car for service, she runs into a quiet, shaggy-haired greasemonkey named Carl (Ron Max), whose favorite hobby is picking up anonymous women and leaving 'em dead by the roadside. It's easy. Just spot a cute blonde in a slinky dress who has car trouble on a deserted road. They're everywhere! And when he isn't slaughtering babes, he's playing voyeur on his gas station's ladies' room.

When Vincent Gallo-lookalike Carl isn't obsessing about Tanya (along with voice-over fantasies of being her husband), he's cruising for fresh meat. That includes 3rd-billed Nancy Allen, who makes a 3-minute appearance as a hitchhiker who blows off Carl's crude attempts at small talk and is promptly knocked off. Determined to prove his love in the last half-hour, this loner invades Tanya's home — tying her up and knocking her about, as she whimpers in a skimpy dress, until she turns the tables in the most obvious possible way. Yawn.

Although both Roberts and Allen were undoubtedly embarrassed that this ever got a release, it's less demeaning than dull. Nudity is more implied than seen, murders are quick, but at least Max makes a wonderfully sorry-assed maniac, complete with a cut-rate mother-related trauma. Still, if you're going to make a sick psycho flick on a threadbare budget, what's the point of holding back? It lacks the balls to cut it as prime exploitation fare, but at least has enough of a grubby, oppressive edge that you'll feel embarrassed to be watching it. Be thankful for small favors.

DRACULA (1968).

A lot has been written about Dracula movies, but I've never found much info about this odd British-TV version. Telecast as an episode of MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION on 11/11/68 and directed by Patrick Dromgoole, this b&w outing has production values that make DARK SHADOWS look sumptuous. But its primary interest lies in the casting. Because when you think of Dracula, who's the first actor that pops into your head? Whoever you chose, the filmmakers obviously couldn't afford him. Because they had to settle for the sadly miscast Denholm Elliott instead.

BLUE MURDER (Shocking Videos; 1995).

Never shown in the US and banned on its home turf of New South Wales, this Australian TV mini-series is a brutal epic — a 200-minute story of crime and police corruption, ripe with graphic violence and vicious assholes. Most important, it's all true! Director Michael Jenkins and writer Ian David adapted two books and numerous interviews for this complex, decade-long tale, which skillfully juggles dozens of characters and shifting narrators, while offering insight on all aspects of these corrupt blokes.

Beginning in 1976, longtime criminal Neddy Smith (Tony Martin) is picked up by the police and coerced into becoming a snitch for Detective Sergeant Roger "The Dodger" Rogerson (Richard Roxburgh). As Neddy's criminal activities increase, Rogerson becomes one of Sydney's most decorated and admired cops, thanks to Smith's willingness to rat out other felons for his own gain. Meanwhile, Neddy and his pals are given free reign to be violent sociopaths, as they take on an entire biker bar, and beat a customer half to death in the middle of a city street for being a day late with a payment.

The Dodger is a ruthless, arrogant bastard with a badge, all right. But trouble arises after Rogerson murders one of Neddy's mates, Warren Lanfranchi, and the guy's junkie/prostitute girlfriend, Sallie-Anne Huckstepp (Loene Carmen), retaliates by blowing the whistle on the city's rampant police corruption. Still, that doesn't slow down the Dodger and Neddy's parasitic relationship, as Smith gets the "greenlight" to

commit crimes and peddle drugs without hassles — he even uses a police car as his getaway vehicle!

Despite heat from his superiors, Roger's unscrupulous behavior increases, and when undercover Drug Squad cop Mick Drury (Steve Bastoni) refuses to change his testimony on a heroin dealer's trial, the Dodger takes the ultimate step and tries to murder this honest cop. From that 1984 moment on, Neddy and Rogerson's lives explode in a drunken spiral of alcohol, crime and bloodshed, complete with coked-out criminals, cold-blooded assassination, an immense drug deal, Rogerson on trial, and the savage murder of Sallie-Anne.

In this tale, there's little difference between the cops and the crooks, since the police casually plant guns at crime scenes, swap evidence in plain sight, and commit point-blank murder in broad daylight. Wisely, the script is given the time to not only focus on the story's pivotal events, but bring depth to each character, as we witness their daily routines and family life. You've also got to appreciate how director Jenkins juxtaposes the most heinous criminal acts with raucous, drunken police partying. Though the accents are bloody thick, all of the performances are intense, and since the actors are unknown on this side of the globe, their drama is all the more effective. As intelligent and suspenseful as anything made for TV, this is a grueling experience that meshes the character-study of PRINCE OF THE CITY with the explosive energy of GOODFELLAS. It is, simply put, a masterpiece.

For additional insight on this true story, check out **WHO KILLED SALLIE-ANNE? (2000)**, a 45-minute Aussie documentary focusing on prostitute-turned-informer Sallie-Anne Huckstepp. In 1982, journalist Michael Willesee conducted an interview with Huckstepp — which was then shelved for two decades, for legal reasons — but is now incorporated into this sad portrait of a streetwalker who paid the price for blowing the whistle on police corruption, when her body was found floating in Sydney's Centennial Park. Thanks to this documentary, Sallie-Anne is able to tell her story from beyond the grave.

Shown walking the nighttime streets of Kings Cross, the obviously-stoned Sallie-Anne bluntly discusses how she was pulled into prostitution by a junkie boyfriend, returns to the first brothel she sold her teenaged ass in, and hangs out with her 9-year-old daughter Sasha (who, as an adult, played a small role in BLUE MURDER, as Drury's nurse). Of course, she also speaks at length about how the murder of beau Warren Lanfranchi turned her into a Down Under media superstar when she fingered the cops.

Mixing 1982 footage directed by Aviva Ziegler and 2000 segments directed by Ben Ulm, Sallie-Anne's story is interspersed with new interviews of prosecutors, an old roommate and police who worked on the case, plus footage of her murder scene — as her quest for justice and revenge eventually led to a clean-up of the NSW police force. It's a powerful epilogue to a story that makes most hard-boiled crime fiction look like STARKY AND HUTCH.

Set entirely in 19th century England, our relocated Count is already the toast of the carriage set. First glimpsed at a high-class party, with greased-back hair, goatee and rectangular granny glasses, the guy might be suave, but he's about as sinister and seductive as a snotty maitre d'. Meanwhile, Corin Redgrave plays a ridiculously foppish mental patient who raves about his "Master." Under hypnosis, his keepers learn of his seduction by fanged nymphs, and when the wacko escapes, Mina Harker (Suzanne Neve) notices that this wild-haired basketcase is her missing hubbie, Jonathan! Of course, his Master is our ever-nocturnal Count.

18-year-old Susan George co-stars as lovely Lucy Weston, who's seduced by Dracula's bloody stories, and when he visits her bedside to put the bite on her, she writhes in orgasmic joy. Let's not forget Prof. Van Helsing, who comes to Lucy's aid with a blood transfusion when he notices fresh holes in her neck. Happily, it doesn't take, and Ms. George makes an alluring new addition to the Count's minions, particularly when she puts the moves on Mina. But leave it to party-poop Van Helsing to pull out his wooden stakes and go searching for Drac's resting place.

Though it ultimately bogs down in cardboard human drama and woeful special effects, this 80-minute adaptation has some amusing touches, plus it's fun to watch Elliott trying on this ill-fitting role (since he's about as convincing as Steve Buscemi playing 007). Now, can *anyone* dig up its companion, *FRANKENSTEIN*, broadcast a week earlier and starring Ian Holm as both the Doctor and his monster?!

PRIVATE LIFE SHOW (Shocking Videos; 1995).

Reality-TV is a hot item nowadays, and mock-reality offshoots are quickly popping up, but this faux-gameshow from Germany was far ahead of the curve. Directed by Martin Buchhorn (*THE SHE-RAT*), this feature-length ode to human manipulation isn't subtle, but deserves kudos for sheer ballsiness. Our slimy host, Burkhard Driest — a real-life bank robber turned actor (who starred in Reinhard Hauff's *SLOW ATTACK*) — promises that this live-broadcast begins a "new era of TV," as contestants are rewarded for personal honesty and punished for lies, with their studio audience judging how many Deutschmarks they've won.

Our married contestants are Manfred and Barbara, and nothing could prepare them for the show's voyeuristic, sadistic headgames, which hope to tear away at their personality faults and expose the pitfalls of their relationship. Aided by a busty blonde hostess (Dolly Buster), the couple is interrogated and criticized, and when Barbara shows off S&M photos, repressed Manfred gets kitchy.

But wait! A half-hour into this mindfuck, the two are exposed as frauds, who've been lying about their *real* life together. This is when it gets good! The program suddenly takes a live-feed into their *actual* home, to interview their children and uncover the truth about overworked Mom and alcoholic Dad. Back in the studio, Manfred gets it on in the green room, Barb pours out her problems on camera, and our host presses for even more honesty (as their prize money skyrockets). Utilizing secret cameras, past lovers, caustic role-reversal games, mean-spirited psychoanalysis, and old home movies of happier days, the pair reveal unfulfilled ambitions, repressed childhood memories and the darkest emotions. Ultimately, the tables are turned and the show erupts into violently overblown directions.

Despite many clever touches (such as phone numbers posted for callers, and shots of the chaotic director's booth), I never actually believed any of it — then again, I'd like to think that most Jerry Springer shows aren't real. I should also warn you that this is definitely *not* a date movie, since its basic conceit is to expose the lies within any commitment. Smart, bleak, strident, and juggling so many ideas that it can't help but drop a few, it's a harsh satire of the TV-expose phenomenon.

WE SHALL RETURN (Something Weird Video; 1963).

Filmed shortly after the Bay of Pigs and released just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, this b&w B-movie uses the recent Communist takeover of Cuba for a low-budget mix of rabidly anti-Castro rhetoric and limp drama. Though its heart is often in the right place, director Philip S. Goodman's filmmaking is strictly routine and the production's deluded self-importance is always at the forefront.

Amidst a cast of first (and, no surprise, only) time actors, a pre-Joker Cesar Romero stars as Carlos Rodriguez, a wealthy Cuban whose world is decimated in the wake of Castro's guerrilla takeover. Literally escaping out of their back door, as armed soldiers barge through the front, Carlos — accompanied by his lawyer son Ramon (Anthony Ray) and girlfriend Nina — leave everything behind and flee to the sunny freedom of Florida. Unfortunately, once in the US, they're just another batch of penniless Cuban refugees, unable to find a job and living in a tiny, Daytona Beach hovel (which nowadays, probably rents out during Spring Break for \$500 a night).

Although the ads make this look like an action flick, the center of the movie is pure melodrama, as Carlos is too proud



to accept government assistance, lawyer Ramon can't even get a manual labor job, and Nina is forced into a gig as a high-paid "cocktail waitress" (nudge, nudge). But soon Carlos is reunited with his old rebel cohorts and elder son Mario, who are all planning an invasion of their homeland. Ultimately, Ramon volunteers to lead this laughably underwhelming attack force (with these freedom fighters going undercover, dressed like they're ready to attend *CADDYSHACK*'s yacht club). Unfortunately, a shitbag traitor in their midst could blow the entire mission, and only a 13-year-old shoeshine boy is bright enough to figure out his identity!

If you couldn't guess, the script goes wildly overboard with hysterical melodrama and heavyhanded speeches, and as Carlos reaches a moral crisis, Romero over-emotes at every opportunity — it's no surprise his film career was primarily littered with lightweight slop like *SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES*. Still, it's a watchable little yarn with an interesting political backdrop. Plus, you gotta love that jazzy saxophone score by Ed Summerlin. It's the best thing about the whole movie!

A QUIET PLACE IN THE COUNTRY (Video Search of Miami; 1969).

After their appearances in the Hollywood mega-dud *CAMELOT*, Franco Nero and Vanessa Redgrave moved onto this Italian chunk of psychosexual dementia, which will have you hooked within its first seconds. Directed by Elio Petri (*THE 10TH VICTIM*), the plot centers around a haunting, but it's less horrific than hallucinogenic, and often resembles a blissfully deranged mix of Fellini, Polanski and Roger Corman's *THE TRIP*. I only wish this subtitled copy was better quality.

Avant-garde artist Leonardo Ferri (Nero) is having a problem with inspiration, even as he's plagued by sexy, sadistic nightmares starring his agent/mistress Flavia (Redgrave). In search of fresh ideas, Ferri rents out an old country house in Milan, where he'll be able to get some much-needed peace and quiet. But the moment the guy moves in, Petri rips loose with a tsunami of disorienting, rapid-fire imagery.

Soon, several of his canvases are mutilated by a mysterious force (which, from the look of Ferri's so-called artwork, was undoubtedly an art critic), bookcases fall from the wall and the ceiling caves in. When Ferri investigates, he learns that a

highly-promiscuous 17-year-old beauty named Wanda (played in flashbacks by Gabriella Grimaldi) was killed in this villa during WWII, and he instantly becomes obsessed with this nympho, her sexual hijinx and death. Eventually setting up a full-blown seance, it leads to a wildly off-the-wall, *SHINING*-like finale of unbridled madness, that's alternately brutal, sad and gloriously cynical — as Ferri finally finds his 'quiet place in the country.'

Redgrave, who was at the top of her stardom, following *ISADORA* and *BLOW UP*, has only a slight role, but makes up for it in sluttiness. It's Nero who's the primary star, and he's suitably intense as this brooding artist turned unraveled basketcase. There's also loads of talent behind the camera, including a score by the prolific Ennio Morricone, photography by Luigi Kuveiller (*DEEP RED*), and ultra-bizarre art direction courtesy of Sergio Canevari. Often gratuitous and occasionally baffling, the story might be a mess, but the end result is a spectacularly overblown EuroTrash delight.



MONEY MOVERS (Shocking Videos: 1978).

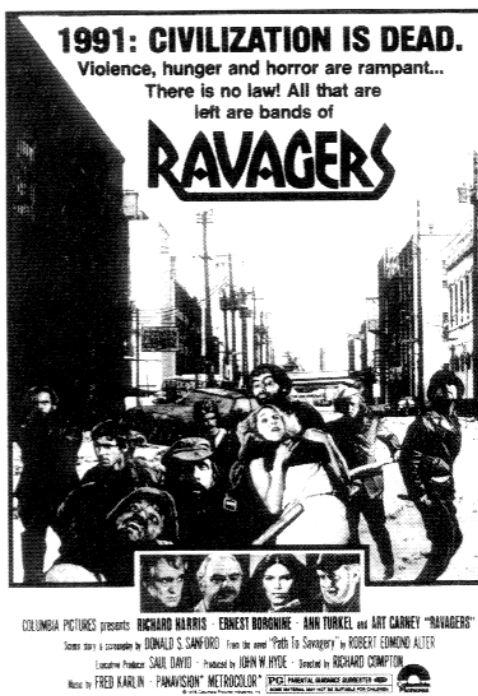
In the late-70s, once-obscure Aussie cinema finally established itself in the international market, and Bruce Beresford became one of their hottest directors after *BREAKER MORANT* (only to turn into a Hollywood whore with slop like *DOUBLE JEOPARDY*). I'm surprised that this early crime thriller from Beresford never made it to the US; tough and unpretentious, it's one of his most purely enjoyable works.

An armored car robbery jump-starts the story, as three masked men pull off a brutal daylight job. Afterward, when the crooks liaison with their wealthy backer, Henderson (Charles "Bud" Tingwell), the tables are suddenly turned and the actual thieves end up slaughtered, so there are no clues to connect Henderson to their theft.

Little does anyone know, another larger heist, centered around the armored car company's \$20,000,000 counting house, is being planned by a trio of their own guards (including a young Bryan Brown), who want an opportunity to strike back at their dead-end jobs and asshole boss. What ensues is a complex but extremely cool yarn, filled with violence, betrayal, working class characters, and parasitic crime factions.

But as the trio plans their intricate inside job, Henderson gets wind of their scheme, and secretly plans to again rub out the perpetrators and make off with all of the loot. As the big heist transpires, amidst unexpected complications in their clockwork precision, the finale is transformed into a tense and deftly-choreographed dance of greed, treachery, gunplay, and dead bodies. Most important, Beresford isn't adverse to tossing in gratuitous bare tits and torture (including a particularly brutal toe-cutting sequence), as long as it fuels the plot.

This is a tightly-wound, no-nonsense tale that gets all of the details right and happily lacks the cynicism and snide humor of today's crime fare. The cast (largely unknown on this side of the globe) effectively spins us through the layered allegiances of the criminal world, while Tony Bonner and Ed Devereaux excel as two of the company's newest employees, who prove to be the most honest of the bunch. Cameraman Don McAlpine (who went onto bile like *MRS. DOUBTFIRE*) keeps it gritty and believable, while British stunt coordinator Alf Joint keeps the action brisk. Definitely a terrific film to watch with a couple oil cans of *Fosters* at your side.

**RAVAGERS (Shocking Videos: 1979).**

I've always had a fondness for post-apocalyptic sci-fi flicks, with their bizarre (more often, goofy) scenarios of the world gone to seed — from the B-movie cheesiness of *THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR* to Richard Lester's lovably surreal *THE BED SITTING ROOM*. Despite its '70s stardom, this entry was barely released to theatres, and after suffering through this heavyhanded bore, it's no wonder. Directed by the usually-competent Richard Compton, it's a humorless, cut-rate romp, unaware of its rampant clichés.

According to a lousy matte painting, the world is a mess. Cities are empty, the seas are poisoned, and ragtag survivors of the human race scavenge for ancient cans of food. Richard Harris (looking even more hungover than usual) stars as Falk. When his blonde bedmate (George Hamilton's one-time spouse, Alana Hamilton) is raped and murdered by a gang of unwashed miscreants (led by sniveling Anthony James), Falk traipses across the barren countryside, in search of the legendary Genesis ("a place where things still grow"), with bloodhound-like James and his ZZ Top-lookalike ravagers in pursuit.

As Harris wanders about, he's pummeled with rocks, meets slumming Oscar-winner Art Carney (as a loony old soldier with a bomb shelter full of food) and blind lawyer Seymour Cassel (who's killed after less than two minutes of screen time), discovers an underground society, and gets all puppy-eyed over a skinny whore (one-time model and then-Mrs. Harris, Ann Turkel). Meanwhile, the amazing Woody Strode plays a member of a peaceful community, living on a rusted old battleship, that takes Falk and his followers onboard. 2nd-billed Ernest Borgnine turns up in the final 20 minutes as the boat's stern and paranoid dictator, who jumpstarts some limp tension, just before James and his grubby minions attack.

Based on the justifiably-obscure novel "Path To Savagery" by Robert Edmond Alter, there isn't an original idea in sight, and sci-fi fans will feel compelled to spit at their TV screens every few minutes. The all-too-infrequent action scenes are disjointed, and even worse, this is strictly PG-fare, without any gratuitous nudity or violence to shake a viewer out of their catatonia. Hard to believe, this ugly mess makes executive producer Saul David's mega-budgeted debacle *LOGAN'S RUN* look tolerable in comparison. Hmmm, perhaps that was their original plan, after all.

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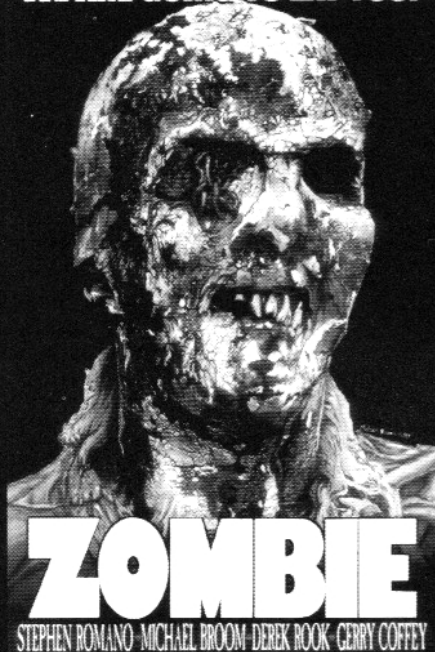
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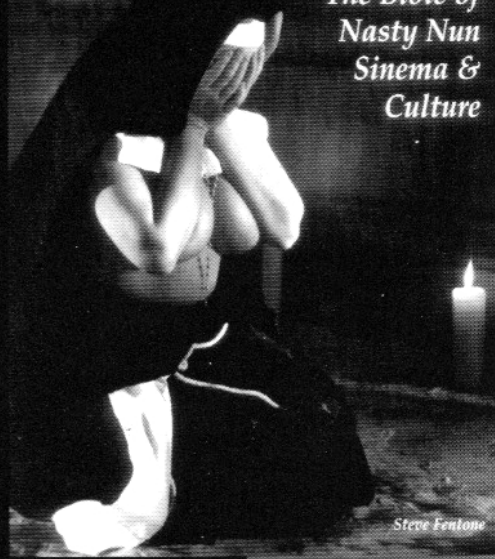


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THE VOICE BEHIND THE FACE: SHOCK CINEMA talks to actor VICTOR ARGO

By RICHARD HARLAND SMITH

You know the face. If you've spent any time at the movies between 1972 and now, you've seen the face peering out from the other side of taxi windshields, over cash registers, through peepholes and behind more than a few loaded guns. Born in Manhattan (as Victor Jimenez) and raised in the South Bronx, Victor Argo has dedicated over thirty years to the acting game, appearing for such celebrated filmmakers as Martin Scorsese, Abel Ferrara, Woody Allen, and Jim Jarmusch. He's played wiseguys and flatfoots, yes-men and countermen, cabbies and kidnappers — plus the occasional Gypsy, the occasional South American dictator, the occasional Saint. A Puerto Rican by descent, he's passed himself off as Italian, Cuban, Arab, Greek, Russian, and Jew. He walked with Jesus in *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST* and shot it out with BUCK ROGERS in *THE 25TH CENTURY*. He manhandled *BOXCAR BERTHA* and knocked the crown off *THE KING OF NEW YORK*. Earlier in his career, he participated in "happenings" with Allen Ginsberg and Yoko Ono and cut his own country & western records.

Victor has been my friend for the better part of a decade now. A lot of people find him intimidating (and he is!), but I wish I had a dime for every young actress who ever took me aside to ask, "What's Victor *really* like?" He's one of the funniest and most charming people I've ever met and also one of the most generous. Seeing a play of mine back in '95, he complimented my writing and told me to let him know if there was ever a part he'd be right for; there's been a part for Victor in everything I've written since. I'm happy that he's working a lot now, and that directors like Amos Kollek, James Gray and Tom DiCillo are giving him a chance to play real people for a change, letting him smile and laugh and sing and play guitar — all of which he does beautifully. And letting him speak. There's a voice behind that great face. It's about time people knew.

SC: I haven't seen you in a while. What's going on, man?

Argo: I did nine days on a film called *STANDARD TIME*, a musical about a cabaret singer trying to make it. I own the club she sings at, where her mother sang thirty years ago. Her mother's an alkie, lives in a hospital, I wind up with her. But the story's not about us, it's about the daughter. What I liked about it is it's like a '40s musical, a Doris Day movie. No pretensions. The girl who does it, Isabel, co-wrote it. She was practically retired, living in London with her husband and this guy came up with the money to make the movie. Isabel Rose. Lovely voice.

SC: Now, was *BOXCAR BERTHA* your first?

Argo: My first movie was... I'll tell you my first —

SC: SMILE, JENNY, YOU'RE DEAD?

Argo: No, my first TV job. I auditioned for CBS. I did the Brando scene from *ORPHEUS DESCENDING* where the bird flies and never lands, you know? About two weeks later they call me up. I'm thinking I must've

been great. (Laughs) The job was to carry Jackie Gleason on stage. He played Reggie Van Gleason, the wrestler. Two guys in front, two guys in back. I was the shortest, so as we were going up three steps to the stage I almost got a hernia. All the weight was on me. And that was it. We carried him on the stage once. No lines. In another bit I played a Russian soldier. No lines. This was '63, '64. I'd love to see those shows again... He did some beautiful work, those characters he played. Gleason did *The Poor Soul*, Freddie the Bartender, Reggie Van Gleason. Now, my first movie was *THE BERKELEY-TO-BOSTON FORTY-BAG* —

body as stupid as that gotta be a fuckin' Jew." (Laughs) I saw the prison there. Man, this place was just severe. I'm sure the Tombs is like Monaco compared to this place. Scary. We were down there about six weeks.

SC: How was it working with David Carradine? He can be a kind of extreme guy, I guess.

Argo: David was a nice guy. We had a great time because we both played guitar. I was always playing my guitar, having girls come over to listen to me sing — a lot of country fans down in Arkansas. So Barry Primus gets me thrown out of the camper we were sharing. And the next morning, the producer comes over and says, "You can change over there in the train station." I said, "I'm not changing in no fuckin' train station." Carradine came along with Barbara Hershey and they said, "Listen, we heard this story and you can stay in our trailer."

SC: Barry Primus threw you out?

Argo: At that time, I didn't understand why he had me thrown out. Now I do. He wanted some time to prepare. Back then I couldn't care less, but now I would do the same thing.

SC: Did you have much contact with David Carradine's father?

Argo: In the middle of the night, we would hear this opera. And it was him, the older Carradine, singing. And it sounded good. He sang opera all the time. I didn't get to know him, we didn't see much of him. It was great working with him. *BOXCAR BERTHA* was the first time I really learned something about acting. In one scene, Barbara Hershey is supposed

to hit me in the nuts with a chain. Marty's got the camera outside this hut so that my head comes out. So I'm holding onto my balls, playing the pain. I'd been hit in the balls a couple of times, it hurts. Marty says "It's too much, Victor." And I thought, what the fuck does this guy know about acting? I studied with Frank Casaro, I been acting for years, fuck 'im. Marty said to give 50% less, so I decided I'd give 80% less. Which I did. But when I saw myself on the screen, I was embarrassed at the over-acting. And that really taught me a good lesson on my first film, at least the kind of acting I prefer. Now I underact so much that most people don't even know I'm there.

SC: Did you know Scorsese before or was this the first time you met him?

Argo: I met him years before when they did *WHO'S THAT KNOCKING ON MY DOOR?*, under its original title, *BRING ON THE DANCING GIRLS*. I can't remember — the thing had three titles. Harvey was in it so I went to a screening and that's how I met Marty. I walked up to him and said, "You're a genius." It was a stunning film to see at the time. He did some wonderful things with slow motion and music counterpoint.

SC: How did you meet Harvey Keitel?

Argo: Acting class. Frank Casaro, who directed a lot of operas. Great acting coach but his first love was opera.



Victor Argo in Jim Jarmusch's *GHOST DOG*, bookended by Cliff Gorman and John Tormey

SC: DEALING: OR THE BERKELEY-TO-BOSTON FORTY-BRICK LOST-BAG BLUES.

Argo: Yeah. I was cut out, except for four frames. You see me driving a car. Charlie Durning was in that. I kidnap Charlie Durning. That whole plot got cut out of the film.

SC: John Lithgow was in that. Robert Lyons. And Barbara Hershey, who was *BOXCAR BERTHA*.

Argo: *BOXCAR BERTHA* was my second. It was a dreadful script, dreadful. As it was written, the character would jump in a boxcar after being raped and beaten up and pull out her guitar and start singing. So we all sat around, five or six days, in a hotel and rebuilt the script. But it wasn't a great rewrite job. A line here, a line there. But for what it was, they did a good job on it. Beautiful photography and everything. We shot it in Camden, Arkansas. 90 miles from Texarkana. They had a working steam engine there.

SC: First time in Arkansas?

Argo: Yeah, first time. We were upwind from a paper mill. It was just amazing, the smell of this place. I never got used to it. Just dreadful. Real cowpoke of a town. One time Barry Primus and I are coming back from the set and the Sheriff is driving us. Some guy walks across the road and the Sheriff slams on the breaks and goes, "That fuckin' Jew." Barry Primus says, "How did you know he was a Jew?" The Sheriff says, "Any-

SC: How long have you two been friends? Forty years?

Argo: Thirty-five? Something like that. Harvey and I are close because we see each other almost every day. But I have friends that I went to grammar school with that I still see once or twice a year. My Puerto Rican friends in the Bronx. My Jewish friends, they got married, moved away. My Puerto Rican friends, most of them stayed in the Bronx. A few are in Washington, DC, but most stayed where they were born.

SC: Did you know any of the Beat Generation writers?

Argo: No, not the Beat Generation, except for the guy who wrote HOWL. Allen Ginsberg. I met him. I used to do happenings. This producer, Norman Seaman, lived in the Bronx. Really interesting guy, lovely guy. He was a producer on 57th Street and what he produced, basically, was vanity productions at Little Carnegie Hall. Musicians from all over the United States would hire him. Violinists, piano players. Some were really terrific musicians, some were mediocre. He had a thing called the Concert Club and he would fill up the house, paper the house, sell club memberships. I met him in a bar in the Bronx. We were talking and I said I was an actor. He said, "Why don't you come down to my office?" I went down to his office and got a part-time job stuffing envelopes. That's where I met Yoko Ono. Yoko Ono came in one day and she started stuffing envelopes with the guy she was living with, I don't know if they were married or not. Fox was his name. And we would stuff envelopes, send out programs, fliers and tickets. And then the happening craze started and Norman produced two of them, one with Yoko Ono at Little Carnegie Hall, where she did her pieces. She would bring out a chair on stage, it was called "The Chair Piece," and she would walk off the stage for ten minutes and people would sit there and watch a chair. Then she'd do a "Sneeze Piece," where she'd put black pepper up her nose, go "Achoo." And she did a "Time Piece," and a "Cut Her Dress Off" piece, where people came up to cut her dress. So when the people came up to cut her dress in the "Dress Piece," Norman didn't want anyone to get unruly, so he went out and rented me a cop's uniform and I had to stand there like I was her guard.

SC: I was at The Strand not too long ago and I found a copy of John Willis' THEATRE WORLD 1967 or '68, and it listed you and Harvey in a production of THE CAINE MUTINY COURT MARTIAL.

Argo: We bounced around with that for a couple of years, doing it at the Lincoln Library and YMCAs. We got a bunch of actors together from Frank's class. We couldn't get the rights to do it, so the actor who played Queeg said let's call it "A Jonathan Shields Production." You know who Jonathan Shields was? He was the producer in THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL. (Laughs) So it was produced by Jonathan Shields so we wouldn't get sued. We did it in YMCAs and, you know, there was no admission and we got a couple of readings in at the Lincoln Center library. We kept firing the directors. Soon as the director said something any one of us didn't like, he'd be out.

SC: Was that your first thing out of acting class?

Argo: My first thing, not out of class, but out of the American Academy, was MI CANDIDO with Miriam Colon...The play was about a Puerto Rican family, but I played an Irish lawyer. That was my first play.

SC: Were you Victor Argo then, or still Victor Jiminez?

Argo: Jiminez.

SC: When was that change?

Argo: About '63. We were doing BUS STOP. I was

playing the Sheriff and me and my friends were trying to come up with a name for me. Because my name was Jiminez I couldn't get a reading for anything but drug dealers. After I changed my name, I didn't get that many either, but I got some. We went through like a thousand names, just sitting there in the theater, and this woman that none of us knew, she had something to do with the theater, she just said "Victor ARGO." And everybody responded to that name, which I wish I hadn't chosen but it's too late now.



Argo with David Carradine in BOXCAR BERTHA

SC: Now, you were born up in the Bronx? What was your childhood like?

Argo: I was born in Manhattan but I grew up in the Bronx. I loved the Bronx, at that time. I grew up in a mixed neighborhood. Prospect Avenue, Kelly Street, Avenue Saint John. One side was Jewish, the other side was Puerto Rican and Irish and around the corner was Black. This was the South Bronx. When I was 12, I moved into a Jewish neighborhood and then at about 18 I moved into a who-knows-what neighborhood. Probably mostly Irish and Italian. Every time my father made more money, we moved to a better neighborhood. What was good was that I had all these friends from the mixed neighborhood, Avenue Saint John — and then when we moved into the Jewish neighborhood, I had a whole bunch of friends there. So I continued to go back to my old neighborhood a few times a year — more than a few times a year — to hang out with those guys. The good part about it was two distinct cultures — mostly Puerto Rican guys that I grew up with, second generation, and then the Jewish guys. I ate at delis just as much as I ate rice and beans. I went to shul after school and played games with them or played handball with my old friends on Kelly Street.

SC: Any gang activity up there?

Argo: Yeah, the older guys, just the generation before us. A lot of gangs. Puerto Rican gangs. Jewish gangs — Black Panthers, believe it or not, they were called. Southern Boulevard in the South Bronx. Tough, tough guys. A couple of Irish gangs. The gangs really came in after the Second World War, just at the end of the Second World War. Up until, I guess the mid-60s, really, they seemed to disappear, at least in New York.

SC: You never ran afoul of any of the gang guys?

Argo: No. I wasn't a tough guy. My friends were nice guys. I went to ball games all the time, but competitive sports never had any interest for me whatsoever. Other than as an observer. I enjoyed playing a game of softball once in a while — not like I'd go and buy my

own glove...I played with them once in a while and a ball would come two feet from me and I wouldn't run it — they'd have to come and get it. So they wouldn't let me play. I wish I had played, because I did enjoy it. I just, I guess I didn't enjoy it enough or else I would've done it.

SC: I think there's an acting gene. People who don't do anything else become actors.

Argo: (Laughs) That's a good concept but I don't believe it —

SC: I don't know if I do either.

Argo: Because I certainly didn't expect to be an actor any time when I was growing up. Later, I was working for a church on 23rd Street as a printer and there was this guy working there, and I used to sing country music all the time. So one day this guy says to me, "Hey, Vic, you should be an actor." I said, "Whaddya talking about?" He says, "You're a born performer, you sing all day long." I said, "Nah!" But he happened to be co-producer and author of a show at the Cherry Lane Theater...He said, "Come down and see the play." I'd never really seen a play, except for a couple of high school things. It was a musical. With beautiful girls. I'm from the Bronx, I'd never seen anything like that. So he says, "What do you think? Would you be interested?" I said, yeah! And I met a few actors, and they were all dressed in earth colors. Dark shirts, dark ties, dark jackets. And dirty pants. All of them were wearing earth colors and dirty pants — you know, paint splattered, all that. So I bought myself a couple of earth colored jackets and ties and I got dirty pants. I went around in the neighborhood and the guys were going, "What the fuck are you dressed up like?" They were still wearing peg pants

and pistol pockets. I said, "I'm gonna be an actor!" They wouldn't let me live it down for years, "you fuckin' dope!" But I started in '54. That was the style.

SC: So there was a ten year gap between that and the Gleason show.

Argo: I was in the Navy for two years, '55-'57. Went to the Academy of Dramatic Arts in '57. Did the play, MI CANDIDO, for which I got recommended by the guy who got me into acting. And I said, "This business is a snap," you know? Two months out of the Academy and here I am in an Off Broadway show. I didn't work again for ten years. But I was not a big pusher, you know? I only have myself to blame for ten, twelve, maybe fifteen years of not really pursuing it.

SC: What'd you do?

Argo: Pursued women. Wine, women and song. I'm lazy. I've always wanted to have a good time. If there's a challenge or a good time, I always go for the good time. And now in the autumn of my years — or is it the late winter? (Laughs) Now I'm wondering why I didn't push harder. But the fact remains, if I could've I would've. I still don't want to push too hard. I'd be happy doing two nice films a year, making a nice amount of money and relaxing the rest of the time.

SC: So until DEALING, that's another ten year gap. Did you do mostly plays?

Argo: Yeah, nothing but plays. Off Off Broadway. Holes in the wall, telephone booths. La MaMa. I did play after play, basements, Jane Street Theater, all over. Just when I was getting hot, not commercially but that people were getting to know me for these free plays. I wasn't making any money — but I was getting a little reputation. I worked with Miriam Colon and she recommended me for DEALING, so that was my first movie.

SC: Did BOXCAR BERTHA lead straight into MEAN STREETS?

Argo: Yeah. And you can basically see WHO'S THAT KNOCKING in MEAN STREETS, the evolution of Bobby's character.

SC: There was probably a lot of competition between the guys in that movie. De Niro, Richard Romanus —

Argo: Yeah, I really wasn't around for the bar scenes. I worked with Harry Northrup. Harry's a terrific actor. Been in about four or five Scorsese films. Just wonderful. Terrific talent. He did the rape scene in WHO'S THAT KNOCKING AT MY DOOR? In BOXCAR BERTHA he plays the Sheriff's deputy. He was one of the cab drivers in TAXI DRIVER, the one who tries to sell the tile from Errol Flynn's bathroom.

SC: What about UNHOLY ROLLERS?

Argo: UNHOLY ROLLERS was about the roller derby and I had a terrific scene in it where I'm talking to the girls, coaching them. And to this day I haven't seen it.

SC: You're in THE TERMINAL MAN with George Segal.

Argo: Yeah. I tell a joke. Me and two orderlies. I tell this joke about a guy in a Men's Room. That's basically it.

SC: And you were on THE WALTONS?

Argo: Yeah, one episode. I played a gypsy, no lines. Gypsy caravan, my brother gets in trouble.

SC: You were friends with Ralph Waite. Did you know him from class?

Argo: Yeah. We used to hang out together. He's from New York. He was the one who encouraged me to go out with this actress once. Her name was Virginia Leith—

SC: Virginia Leith?

Argo: She was the girl in Kubrick's first movie —

SC: Yeah, but she was the star of —

Argo: THE HEAD THAT WOULDN'T DIE.

SC: THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE.

Argo: Are you sure? This was her whole head, not just a brain.

SC: I don't know much, but I know this.

Argo: But this was '74 or '75. We just went out a short time. When I told her I wanted to stop seeing her, she got angry, she yelled at me, "Who do you think you are, breaking up with me? You — you — you bit player!" (Laughs)

SC: Now, just before this I know you appeared on ALL IN THE FAMILY.

Argo: I had an audition to play a Puerto Rican. He was going to buy the house next door to Archie Bunker. So I went in and Jane Murray was casting. She looked at me and said, "I'm sorry, I need a Puerto Rican." I said, "I am Puerto Rican." She said, "No, no, I need a real Puerto Rican." I said, "I am a real Puerto Rican." And she said, "No, no, I mean like this," and she showed me a picture of a stereotypical Puerto Rican. Dark skin, moustache. And I understood the joke would be funnier if the guy looked like the stereotype. So I said, "Let me come in tomorrow." She said, "Okay, but it won't do you any good." So I went home, cut off some of my hair, put a mustache on, put on a bright blue jacket and hat, a yellow shirt with black thick stripes and I walked back into her office and she looked up and said, "Wow, you're a great actor!" I hadn't read a line.

SC: Your next movie with Martin Scorsese was TAXI DRIVER.

Argo: We shot that bodega scene on Amsterdam Avenue. That was only the second time he actually gave me some direction. He never directed me. His way of directing most actors was to say, "Less!" And he never had to do that with me. But in this movie I came around and killed the guy. I really came around angry, and Marty said, "Less!" I said, "Whaddya mean less? I been robbed five fuckin' times. It's a hot summer day, I wanna kill this motherfucker." Marty says, "I know, but." So I said, "If you want less, I'll give you less." But in between takes, some guy comes in to buy beer. And when he found out the place was closed, he blew up, he went, "What the fuck you mean you're shooting a MOVIE, motherfucker!" And Marty said to me, "Jesus Christ, talk about reality. He's that upset because he can't get a six-pack." He said to me "Maybe you're right."

SC: That's a bizarre scene, not just because of the violence. There's something about you hitting him with that pipe that's worse than DeNiro shooting him in the back.

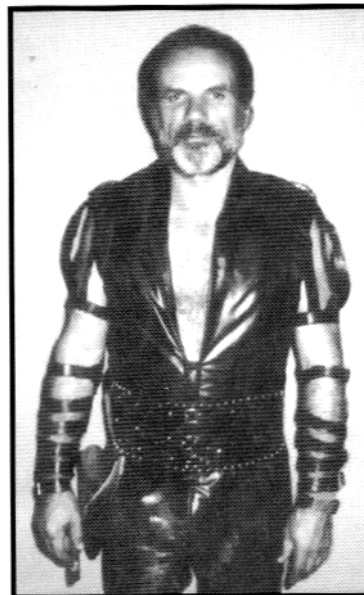
Argo: That kind of anger I can understand. My father had a candy and tobacco store, he got beat up a couple of times. If that happened to me, I'd have a shotgun and blow them away without any compunction. (Pause) I was supposed to play the FBI guy. The one DeNiro talks to at the rally. Marty wanted to cast it off-type, but he changed his mind.

SC: Did you work with Richard Pryor on WHICH WAY IS UP?

Argo: Yeah, that was a good time. We were both afraid of heights and we had to climb this ladder. We were painting contractors and he leaves that job to go north. It was supposed to be a takeoff of Lina Wertmüller's THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI.

SC: I don't know HOT TOMORROWS.

Argo: That was directed by Marty Brest. He directed BEVERLY HILLS COP. It was made for the American Film Institute, he asked me to do it. It was a terrific part and the movie was really terrific. Ray Sharkey was in it and that little guy — you know, "da plane da plane."



Vic suits up for BUCK ROGERS

SC: Herve Villechaize.

Argo: Yeah, really nice film.

SC: I'm hoping there's a story about the time you were on BUCK ROGERS. You played "Raphael Argus" — was that a play on your name?

Argo: No, it was just a coincidence. I was broke in Hollywood, trying to get back to New York. I hadn't worked in thirteen months. I had quit Hollywood before because I didn't want to do any more TV crap. Or at least the crappy parts I was getting then. So I stayed in New York, but there was no work there whatsoever. So I decided to go back to L.A., just to make some money, and then turn around and come back again to New York. I went back to California and it was thirteen months without a job. So I got called to do BUCK ROGERS, and I said to my agent, "I didn't read for BUCK ROGERS." He said,

"Well, they want you, so." I'm walking onto the set and I see this young guy and he says to me, "Remember me?" And I said, "No." He was a guy who had directed me in a thing for AFL, some Tennessee Williams thing. I'd worked for him for free. And he remembered me and called me in for that part. I had worked for him for nothing and he was paying me back. I got the \$1,700 and took the first plane back to New York.

SC: What'd you do in the episode?

Argo: As Argus? (Laughs) I shot people, I ran around, they shot me, you know, a barroom thing. In a leather outfit. (Laughs) I had done WONDER WOMAN, too. I was in this scene with an actor, I never remember his name. Terrific actor. Blond hair. James —

SC: James Olsen?

Argo: Yeah, James Olsen. We were coming up onto the beach in a rubber raft. We were both German spies, and Wonder Woman comes over and throws us both over her shoulder. And he says to me between takes, "Vic, we studied Shakespeare for this?" He was an established actor in New York. I wasn't.

SC: Was he on his way down?

Argo: I guess so. He was doing WONDER WOMAN. (Laughs) I'll tell you about New York actors in L.A.

When I first got there, I went over to Schwab's Drug Store, and I'd see these actors who, six or eight years before when I was studying, were on Broadway. Respected actors, who all of us young actors looked up to. Cut to when I went to L.A. in 1971 or '72, I'd see them in Schwab's, hanging around. Waiting for a day's work on some garbage TV show, or to direct one. They'd all come to L.A. to try and make money and they were doing garbage. When I decided to leave L.A., it was because I didn't want to be fifty years old and hanging around Schwab's waiting for a day's work. Luckily, because of the way I look, I got a lot of gangster parts, but that's not what I wanted to do with my life.

SC: You'd never been out there before?

Argo: No. Harvey called me and said, "Vic, they love New York actors out here." So I drove out there with my girlfriend, and when I got there they hated me. They loved Harvey as a New York



Vic Argo as pissed-off bodega owner Melio in TAXI DRIVER

actor because he'd done Marty's movie, *WHO'S THAT KNOCKING?* Cassavetes liked it, so they introduced Harvey to everybody in Hollywood. Which made him think they just loved New York actors. A year later, he turned around and came back, and I was there for six and a half years. Seven years. I still have nightmares about living there. Literally. It's not only a dull place to live, as far as I'm concerned, but it's got that caste system. If you're a movie star, there's the top level. If you're a TV star, there's another level. And if you're not working, you're a piece of shit. I remember, when we were young actors, we'd hang around in Downey's on 45th and Eighth, and Broadway actors would come in, big names, men and women, and if they were having a party they'd invite the young actors. In Hollywood, they won't even talk to you.

SC: Where were you in *DESPERATELY SEEKING SUSAN*?

Argo: I played a Missing Persons detective. Funny scene, with the husband and his sister.

SC: Did you work with Schwarzenegger on *RAW DEAL*?

Argo: No. I had one line, but everybody quotes it all the time. I walk into a barber shop and put a gun to a guy's head and say, "I hear you're going to be a witness... witness *this*." And I shoot him.

SC: The cast for *OFF BEAT* is unbelievable. You and Harvey Keitel. John Turturro, Joe Mantegna, Fred Gwynne, Chris Noth. Penn Jillette.

Argo: *OFF BEAT* was a lot of fun. The story was really a lot of fun, there's a lot of good stuff in it, but at the end of the film where the cops come out to dance, they dance for forty seconds. It wasn't a good production number. It should've been more of a wow.

SC: Did you film the bank scene on location?

Argo: Yeah, in Queens. People said it was a copycat of that one with Pacino, you know, *DOG DAY AFTERNOON*. But it was a joke, you know? Roger Ebert said, I'm paraphrasing, but on his show he mentioned "the bank scene with Harvey Keitel and his friend..." Didn't even know my name.

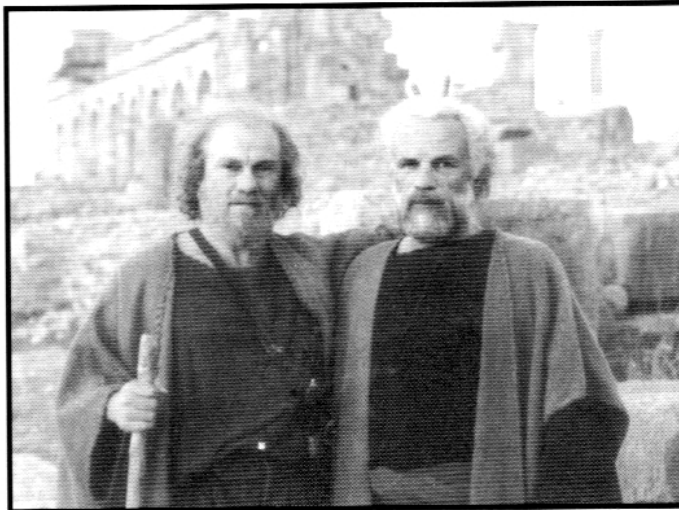
SC: You worked with Scorsese again on *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*.

Argo: Originally he wanted me to play Saint Peter, but then he changed his mind and gave the part to John Ford Noonan. And then he changed his mind again and gave it back to me.

SC: Where'd you film that?

Argo: Morocco. We were supposed to shoot in Israel but we couldn't get insurance. Morocco's gorgeous. We had a great time, the Apostles really got along great. We were all from different states. It was Marty's concept to make them as real as possible. The Apostles were basically dumb fishermen. Not dumb, but like blue collar workers, and they all had different accents because they were from different regions originally. I guess it just doesn't sound convincing when you have a Brooklyn accent in a Biblical film, but I think the different accents didn't mean anything, you know? The way we all got along together was almost spiritual. I mean, it was really amazing. Almost everybody in the cast played a musical instrument. Michael Been, great singer, had one of the top ten Christian rock albums of the '80s. He's from San Francisco and he's a wonderful actor. Harry Dean Stanton sings and plays the guitar. I sing and play the guitar. John Lurie plays the alto sax. The Englishman who played Pontius Pilate, the blonde-haired singer —

SC: David Bowie?



Harvey Keitel and Vic Argo in old age make-up during *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*

Argo: Bowie, yeah. David Bowie actually sang background for one of my songs. We were singing one night and he sang backup for the rest of the guys. It was great.

SC: What were the conditions like out there?

Argo: Harvey called me, told me to come a week early to Morocco so I could get the feeling of really being alive in those times. We shot in a town called Oumesnat, which had no electricity and no running water. It looked like it had been there since before Christ. Beautiful sunsets, the colors, unbelievably beautiful. And Harvey says, "Let's sleep there." Because he had done it with Willem Dafoe and they both thought the process was beneficial, to sleep on hard stone, on a little mat. We slept in the Chief's house, the Chief of the town. The insects. Flying around, buzzing around. Middle of the night, Harvey got up to go to the bathroom, he came back and said, "Whatever you do, don't go to the bathroom. The bathroom is a hole outside and there are all kinds of things crawling around down in there." (Laughs) Hey, whaddya expect — it's a hole in the ground! I didn't sleep a wink. I don't need that kind of rehearsal, sleeping on a stone bed at night, insects flying around. I don't think it would help the characterization of Saint Peter in any way, shape or form whether I'm sleeping at The Ritz in London or in Oumesnat.

SC: Sounds like fun, though.

Argo: It was a great time. We'd be singing late at night and Marty would knock on the door: "Fellas, I gotta get some sleep." We'd sing until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Harry Dean just never stopped singing. We sang rock and roll songs, all the '50s songs. Harry Dean and his Mexican songs that he wrote. My songs.

SC: You went straight from there to the series, *DREAM STREET*.

Argo: It was basically *THE SOPRANOS* without "fuck you" and that much violence. Two Italian families. In fact, if you look at the credits of *THE SOPRANOS* and *DREAM STREET*, they're almost identical, going through the tunnel, seeing the signs of Jersey City. I thought it was fairly well-written, well-acted. A lot of good young actors and actresses. Ran seven weeks. It was put on at the wrong time of the year, as a replacement. Started in April at 10:00 on a Friday night. And there's nobody between 14 and 50 who stays home on Friday night when the summer's beginning. It was the favorite show of the head of CBS or NBC, whatever the television station was. I read that in "Three Blind Mice," this book about the networks. It was well done, well-written, well-directed and had some really good actors in it. Tom Signorelli. Very good actor. It was just the wrong time for it.

SC: Not a big part, but I thought it was a nice scene in *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS* with you and Martin Landau.

Argo: Woody works strange. If he doesn't like something, he'll shoot it fifty times, on different days. The two times I've worked with him, it was only supposed to be like one day, two days, but I wound up working seven or eight days on each one. Because he sees something he doesn't like, he just reshoots it...He cast me by looking at me. I never read for him, he just looked at me and I got the part. His photographer, Brian Hamill, Pete Hamill's brother, says to me, "Whatever you do, don't ask him any questions. He don't like you to ask too many questions." So in *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS*, I gotta walk in to the room and start talking. And I didn't know when to start talking. It was a tracking shot, so I gotta ask him that, it's technical. So I went over there, I said "Woody, when do you want me to start talking?" I expected him to say, "When you're three feet into it or whatever." He said, "Whenever you want." And that's the only discussion I had with him.

SC: And you were in *SHADOWS AND FOG*.

Argo: I had a scene where I grabbed him by the throat, and I've got to talk about two dead sisters or something. And I couldn't get the language out, I was stumbling over the words. And he did like eight takes. I was sure he was gonna just fire me, it was so frustrating, eight takes. Every time, it was like a tongue twister. So he said, "Get me a cue card," and he started writing out my lines. I said, "You don't have to do this, I'll get this," but he just wrote out my lines and he held them under his chin and that's how we did the scene. I asked him later, "Woody, would you autograph this," and he just kept walking. It was a pleasure to work for him. First of all, I love his films, I just love them. It's so quiet on the set, everybody knows exactly what they're going, you never hear a peep. It's totally professional, works like well-oiled machinery.

SC: I guess the opposite of well-oiled would be Abel Ferrara.

Argo: Not on *KING OF NEW YORK*. He was terrific. I didn't know him very well then and I didn't know anybody in the cast. I was like an outsider. I felt like I was diseased on that movie. I mean, everybody was nice, don't get me wrong. But everybody seemed to know each other for some reason.

SC: Well, they were all the same age. It was Caruso and Larry Fishburne and Snipes. And they all went on to do big things.

Argo: Yeah, including some of the people who had smaller parts, like Buscemi. I think I'm the only failure out of that movie. (Laughs)...It was terrific working with Chris Walken. I was in LA, in Malibu, just getting sun, having a good time. Resting. And I get a call to audition for *KING OF NEW YORK*. So I get the script, I have no idea who Abel Ferrara is, none whatsoever. And I asked a few people, and finally some actress told me he had done a few films, *MS. 45* and *DRILLER KILLER*. I got the script, and I wasn't crazy about the script, but it was a good part, a terrific part for me. I met him up at the Chateau Marmont on a Sunday. He comes to the door in a derby with a bottle of wine, and I thought — man, what am I doing here? He starts asking me questions and I'm just sitting back, watching him. But then I think, "Hey, what am I stupid? Act enthusiastic about it." Which I did. So he said, "Okay, I'll see you, man." I said, "Yeah, I'll see ya." And I didn't think any more of it until the next week when I got a call from him telling me "You gotta come to New York, you gotta be here Saturday morning to audition with Chris Walken." And I said, "I'll come on Monday." He said, "No, no, you gotta be here Saturday, we gotta do it Saturday." So I got on a plane and came to New

York. Come Saturday, there's no Chris Walken. I'm waiting an hour, the phone rings. Abel says, "That's Chris Walken. He says he can't make it today, there's too much traffic." And I had flown in from California. I was furious. I walked out, slammed the door, got outta there. I called Harvey, I said "Who does this guy think he is? He couldn't come from the West 80s, I came from fucking California." Harvey says, "No, no, he's a great guy, you'll love him, you'll love him." Next day, Abel calls me up, he says, "Vic, can you come in right now." It was ten in the morning on a Sunday. He says, "Chris is coming over." As furious as I was, I went over to the loft. I was there for about five minutes talking to Abel and in walks Chris and he looks at me and looks at Abel and he says, "Vic Argo? Give him the part!" Abel said, "No, no, I want to see if the chemistry —," Chris says, "Chemistry my ass, give him the fuckin' part," and he walked out.

SC: So how was he to work with?

Argo: I'm mesmerized by his work, on film. In person, it's even more devastating. I would have one line between his long monologues and I was so into him, so hypnotized by not only his work but by the choices he makes, different every time. I do a scene five hundred times, I give you exactly the same scene. I have no ability, or maybe no desire, to improvise. I'm like a goat — "this is the way it's gonna be." He'll do it fifty times and fifty times it'll be totally different, and every time good. So I would forget my cues. It happened like three or four times. And Abel said, "Vic, what's the matter with you?" I was embarrassed to say this, but I had to say it to Chris, because I felt bad. I went over to him and said, "Listen Chris, I gotta tell you the truth. The way you work, I'm so into it that I forget to come up with my lines." By way of apology, you know? He said, "No, no, it's all right, 'cuz I like doing it over and over again anyway." So we had a good time. And then I also did the worst movie ever made with Chris — MCBAIN. That was a piece of —

SC: But you must've had fun down in the Philippines, right?

Argo: Manila is one place I'd never care to return to. I just felt this hostility from the Filipinos.

SC: You were on your own through most of that movie, you didn't really get to interact with Michael Ironside and Steve James —

Argo: Only off the set. But these guys, almost all of them were married, they didn't go out. Chris wouldn't go out, he thought it was dangerous. (Smiles) He makes me laugh. I'm rolling on the floor, he's not even telling jokes, he's just talking. Stream of consciousness, about his family, and I'm rolling on the floor. I'd say, "Let's go out." He says, "No, it's dangerous here. My brother was here during the Vietnam war, he told me they don't like Americans." I said, "Bullshit." I'd been out four or five times, discoing. I used to go out with this English actor, he'd take me to these dens of iniquity. I said, "Come on." And it was about 3:00 in the morning and we left the hotel and everything was closed. We finally got to this one called the Mars Club, and as we got out, this car actually bumps into Chris. And I jump outta the car, I'm furious, and I see these two big Filipinos outside the door of the club, and Chris says, "We better get the fuck outta here." I don't know why they dislike Americans so much, but I imagine there's a good reason. It's not a place where you feel welcome. I mean, I don't feel welcome in Paris either, but it's a little more civilized.

SC: You and Chris Walken were both in TRUE ROMANCE.

Argo: One of the scenes that he had and I had, I thought, was the best in the movie. It was totally cut

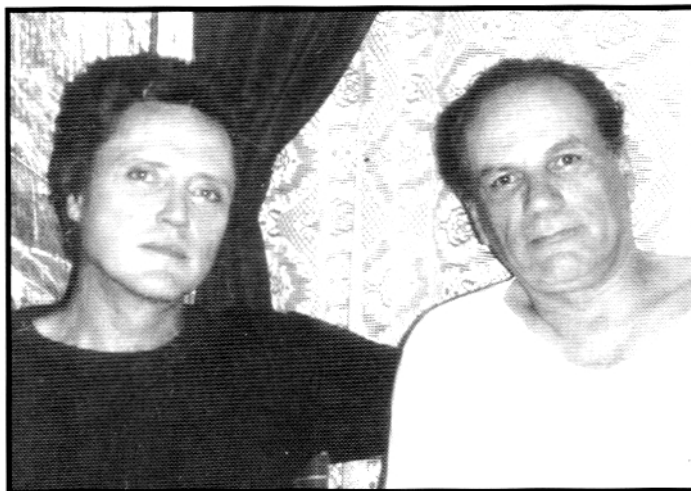
out. Me and Walken, before we leave Detroit. In this elevator, hilarious scene. It was just so funny, but Tony Scott is an action director. Forget plot. I was totally cut out of that movie. I was supposed to kidnap a woman at the end. A lot of funny lines, after the big shootout I escape and so does that blond-haired actor, what's his name, went out with Lili Taylor for a while —

SC: Oh, Michael Rappaport.

Argo: Me and Rappaport get away, two elevator doors open and we both dive into the elevator. Very funny.

SC: QUICK CHANGE was shot in New York.

Argo: That audition was interesting. I went into the audition and this casting agent, who never calls me in, never —. Back when Pacino was still trying to do BORN ON THE 4TH OF JULY, this casting guy, I tried to get him to call me in, but nothing. So I talked to somebody who's a friend of Al's and he got me an audition. I walked in, and this same casting director who never calls me puts his arm around my shoulder and says, "You're one of my favorite actors." I wanted to kill him. Same guy was casting QUICK CHANGE. For some reason, he did call me in. There were two directors, Bill Murray and Howard Franklin, and two directors tend to confuse the issue. You had to listen to two people who —. I mean, I'm very funny, you know that. But my timing is my timing, and Bill Murray has his timing. Howard Franklin had his own timing. But it was a good experience, it was fun.



Vic Argo hanging out with Christopher Walken

SC: VENDETTA: SECRETS OF A MAFIA BRIDE. Was that the mini-series you shot over in Italy? Or was that DUE VITE UN DESTINO ("Two Lives, One Destiny")?

Argo: I got those two confused. They were both with Carol Alt. In one, I was her uncle.

SC: Doesn't she kill you in one? In Sicily? Somebody kills you.

Argo: She kills Rod Steiger. In one, she becomes the head of the Mafia. You know, ridiculous scripts, the Italians love them. Fortunately, both directors were wonderful. One was an American director, used to be on, remember those little things they had on LOVE AMERICAN STYLE, these little short little snippets. He was in those.

SC: Stuart Margolin?

Argo: Right. Terrific director.

SC: He was a regular on THE ROCKFORD FILES, which you did.

Argo: Yeah. We weren't friends or anything, I just happened to audition for him and he gave me the part. It was great working with him. It was great to be doing something in a beautiful country, where the food was so good. That was the one in Sicily. It was so much

fun, working with Italian crews. You'd have a call for six o'clock at night and they'd pick you up at six o'clock in the morning. It's total insanity but it's wonderful insanity. And the other one, who was an Italian director —

SC: Romolo Guerrieri. He directed some Italian cop thrillers during the 70s.

Argo: Both times I worked with terrific actors. Rod Steiger and Burt Young.

SC: I see Burt in my neighborhood all the time.

Argo: I had seen him in a few films and always loved him. I think he's got a nice sense of realism, he's real all of the time. You never catch him acting. His sense of realism is the best I've ever seen. When we were in Sicily, a couple of young guys said to me, "Do you know Burt Young?" I said, no. They said, "Oh, we'd love to meet him and have a drink with him." I said to call him, but they were too shy to call, so I said I'd call. I pick up the phone, "Gimme Burt Young, please." Burt picks up on his end, says "Hello?" I said, "Burt?" He goes, "Yeah?" I says, "Vic Argo. I'm in the mini-series with you." He says, "So?" I said, "Well, we were just going out for a drink and we were wondering if you'd care to join us." And he goes "I'll be right down." (Laughs) Great guy. Wonderful, charming. We worked together on both of them. We had dinner at Berlusconi's house. You know who Berlusconi is? Silvio Berlusconi is like the second richest man in Italy. He owns sixty-five magazines, three TV stations, and he became premier of Italy. He also owns Milan's soccer team. After we had done the mini-series, we got invited to his villa for dinner, north of Milan. It had like 127 rooms, it was one of the most amazing things I've ever been to in my life. It's a long story, but after the night was over, Berlusconi said it took him 40 years to get these 65 magazines, three TV stations, supermarkets all over Italy, construction business, whatever. It took him 45 years of hard work. And as he's shaking hands goodnight with all of us, Burt says to him, "I'm glad to see you're doin' so good."

SC: Did he get it?

Argo: (Laughing) I don't think so, I don't think so.

SC: What did you think when you saw the script for BAD LIEUTENANT?

Argo: I thought it was brilliant, just brilliant. The movie didn't turn out that way, unfortunately, but it was close. I think the

part of the nun was miscast. I would've cast it totally different. She had a monologue that, as written, was just amazing. About forgiveness. Which was in the movie, but not the way it was written. I just thought it was a great, great script. I had nothing in it. I got second billing and I had like nine lines.

SC: Not being Catholic, there was a little too much agonized Catholicism in there for my taste.

Argo: I told Harvey when I read it, "This is what THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST should have had." Or was trying to get at. Basically. The message of Christ. Forgiveness. Love and forgiveness. This is what BAD LIEUTENANT tells you. At least, that's what I get, if you want a concise opinion of what Jesus' teachings were, it's love and forgiveness. Period. All the rest is bullshit. And this is what BAD LIEUTENANT is. A nun gets raped. Then she forgives them. Like I said, this monologue was exquisite. And the ending disturbed me a lot, when Harvey's character lets these motherfuckers go. I actually felt this tear in my stomach. But that's good moviemaking, isn't it? And good writing. I mean, I see Abel shooting something and I think, "what a piece of shit!" And then I see it on the screen, and I say, "Brilliant! How did that happen?" If I knew how that happened, I'd be a director. And I see that constantly with Abel.

SC: It's interesting that in a four year period, you did three movies that had Jesus Christ as a character. LAST TEMPTATION, BAD LIEUTENANT, and then HOUSEHOLD SAINTS.

Argo: I love that movie. Terrific film, terrific cast...We had a lot of fun. Just wonderful all around. Shot it all in North Carolina. Nancy Savoca is a wonderful director. If she were a man, she would probably be directing anything she wanted, any time she wanted. Just a lovely, lovely woman. She was seven or eight months pregnant, shooting in unbearable heat, cigar and cigarette smoke around that poker table for days and days. She never lost her temper, she always knew what she wanted.

SC: You didn't have too much to do in Ferrara's DANGEROUS GAME.

Argo: No, DANGEROUS GAME was a lark. Free trip to California. Party on the beach. That was Abel's wife, Nancy, playing Harvey's wife in the movie. Wonderful actress. I like the movie. I think it's a movie that tells the truth about Hollywood. It's the best thing Madonna's ever done.

SC: And you got to wear a cravat.

Argo: I didn't have any lines, so I figured I'd do it if I could play him gay. Flamboyant. Abel said, "Sure." But every time I came up with a line, I'd crack everybody up. So they had to cut all that out. The movie wasn't about a gay cinematographer. But at least there's a shot of me walking out in the cravat and the hat. All I did was bust balls on that film. Madonna was wonderful. She was wonderful to everybody on the set.

SC: I remember when I met you was around the time you were working on SMOKE and BLUE IN THE FACE.

Argo: I liked BLUE IN THE FACE. I wasn't around for much of SMOKE. BLUE IN THE FACE was fun. I loved the guy who played Jackie Robinson. What's his name? Keith David. Wonderful actor. We did eight takes, and the reason we did eight takes was because —. It's basically his scene, I'm just listening to him. But I cried every time. By the seventh take, I went up to the director. Not Wayne Wang, he was sick that day. I went up to Paul Auster and said, "I gotta do it again." He asked why, I said, "Because I keep crying. I don't wanna cry in this scene." So we got it on the eighth take.

SC: You worked with Abel Ferrara again on THE FUNERAL.

Argo: THE FUNERAL is, I think, a terrific film. We shot it in Queens. I think he captured the genre, the really heavy, sad life of those characters.

SC: The opposite of that would be NEXT STOP: WONDERLAND, I guess. One of the few movies that lets you crack a smile.

Argo: Yeah, but a lot of funny stuff was cut out of that. The ending was changed, probably to please the mall crowd. When the guy takes off in the plane with the blonde with the wig on — it had nothing to do with the movie. The movie's supposed to end where they meet on the train.

SC: What's the name of the actor she gets on the plane with?

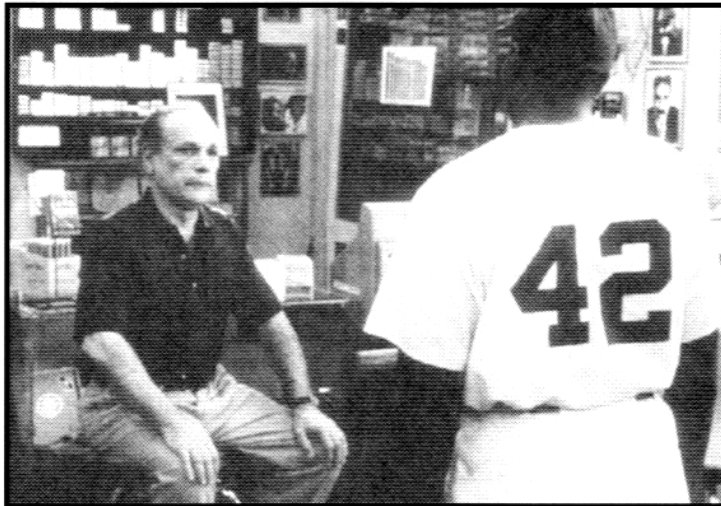
Argo: Oh, José Zúñiga. Nice actor. But once she leaves him there, there's no reason to continue with his story. What's it got to do with the movie?

SC: You and José Zúñiga were in the pilot for PRINCE STREET. With Vincent Spano. And Mariska Hargitay, who's now on LAW AND ORDER: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT.

Argo: I just did PRINCE STREET to pay my rent. It was horrible. It was supposed to be NYC detectives, and the first guy they cast in that looked like he just stepped off of Christopher Street, and the other guy had a blond pompadour, looked like a model. From Malibu. Then I met the two thugs who actually wrote it, who were Special Unit. Two Irishmen, about eight feet tall, gorillas, they were the technical advisors. They replaced the lead with Spano, but —

SC: Abel Ferrara's NEW ROSE HOTEL was another quickie for you.

Argo: It was supposed to be in Morocco, but we shot my scene in an alley on 19th Street. That was one of Abel's fly-by-night epics. First of all, I didn't understand the short story. He loved it. I said, "Abel, what's it about?" Reading the story, I felt like I was swimming underwater. Abel said to me, "Vic, come on over, we gotta write the scene for tomorrow." I said, what am I playing? He says, "You're a Portuguese businessman." I said, "All right, I'll be over tonight." I get over there, he's not there. I pick up his guitar and start playing. He eventually comes in, he says, "Oh, where's my other guitar?" And before you know it, we're playing guitar until three or four in the morning, we didn't write the scene. He said, "Don't worry, I'll write it by tomorrow morning." Next day I get there, there's no scene. He goes over to the book, "Oh, here's a good line." That's the way he wrote the scene. But he sent somebody to Morocco with a digital camera to get the shots leading up to where we did the bit on 19th Street. I think it was all shot here. It was supposed to be Germany, Morocco, New York, and L.A., but they didn't have the money so I think it was all shot in New York. He may have shot some of it in L.A. That movie just didn't work.



Argo with "Jackie Robinson" in BLUE IN THE FACE

SC: It must've been a kick to work on GHOST DOG.

Argo: I love Jarmusch. Period. DEAD MAN and MYSTERY TRAIN are my favorites. He was in BLUE IN THE FACE, but we didn't work together. But he just called me and offered me the part. I wanted the bigger part, the one that John Tormey plays. Tormey was terrific, though. It's his first real part in films, and he's just a wonderful character actor. I didn't get to know Henry Silva, but I really enjoyed even being in the same room with him. He's a cult hero.

SC: Johnny Cool!

Argo: (Laughs) He seemed like a very charming guy. A lot of good actors in that film played small parts. One of the best parts of that movie was cut out. This wonderful monologue by Gene Ruffini, the old timer with the squeaky voice, where he talks about a guy getting his head chopped off. I asked Jarmusch why he cut it, and he told me he felt the comedy was distracting from the stuff about the code of the samurai. I'm para-

phrasing, but that was basically it. It was a pleasure working with Jarmusch. Wonderful guy to work with.

SC: You had a good death scene in that. I mean, nothing beats KING OF NEW YORK, but —

Argo: Yeah, but this had some great lines in it. When I died, I wanted to bang my head against the door, and I said to Jarmusch, "Listen, can I die like this, I can go thud?" He said, "Sure." And I wanted to exhale a big breath, which I did, but you can't really hear it.

SC: It seemed to me like you were making THE YARDS for about five years.

Argo: Well, they went back and added some scenes a year after it was shot. I did two movies between. But it was fun working with everybody on that.

SC: Back when you were working on it, you made it sound like it was a little movie you were making yourself. Then it comes out and it's got James Caan in it, it's got Ellen Burstyn.

Argo: Working with Phoenix was great. Joaquin Phoenix. And Wahlberg. Mark Wahlberg. He and I didn't have any scenes together, but they were fun to be around. Steve Lawrence is terrific in it. He plays the Borough President. The director loved me, but when I walked into the audition I didn't know who he was because I hadn't seen LITTLE ODESSA yet. But he told me he'd been waiting for me for three days. I said, "Why?" He told me one of his all time favorite scenes was the bodega scene in TAXI DRIVER.

SC: How'd you get interested in country music?

Argo: I just heard one song one day. By Hank Snow. Up until then, country music had always sounded the same to me. When you don't really listen to something, you can hear fifty thousand country records, they all sound like the same song. And the next day, I went back and tried to find it, the same song, and I heard another song, by Ernie Tubb. Then I heard Hank Williams. And that was it. I just switched completely. Before that, I was kind of — I was never with the times. All my friends liked Eddie Fisher, they liked Frank Sinatra. I liked Vaughn Monroe. I loved Guy Lombardo. My friends would say, "Would you take that shit off?"

SC: Zip's Diner, off of 395 in Connecticut, they have Guy Lombardo's "Harbor Lights" on the little mini juke box, and I play it every time I eat there.

Argo: I love the way he'd repeat the lyrics, you know (sings) "Oh, those velvet lips, those velvet lips," and the music would go along (mimics trombone), brr brr brr brr. (Laughs) You know, kind of silly and corny but I loved

him. And Vaughn Monroe. My sisters would only listen to Frank Sinatra, Vic Damone, Dick Haymes. And I would only listen to country music. My friends thought I was totally insane.

SC: You recorded your own [records]?

Argo: I did six sides. Four sides were released, but they never went anywhere. Small record label here in New York. CJ Records. I don't even have a copy of the 45s. I gave one to everyone in the family, now nobody's got 'em.

SC: You singing country songs?

Argo: That I wrote, yeah. My producer and I went to the Hotel Taft, downstairs, and on Saturday night Willie Nelson was playing. And at the time, he had a crewcut, a turtleneck, gray suit. But it was packed. At that time, Willie was pretty well known in New York, 1967. Yeah, I was going to be a country singer.

/ CONTINUED on PAGE 47

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VIOLENCE THROUGH THE LENS: An Interview with Director KINJI FUKASAKU

By STEVE RYFLE / Translation: Toshiko Aidilman

At long last, Americans may soon get a chance to see violence on film — real violence on film that makes Sam Fuller's and John Woo's films look like kid stuff. Violence that makes you think.

Japanese director Kinji Fukasaku (b. 1930), who until now has mostly been known outside his homeland for films that are wonderfully weird but totally atypical of his main body of work, is getting some major international exposure thanks to the huge controversy (and big box-office success) of his latest movie, *BATTLE ROYALE* (2000). Star-ring "Beat" Takeshi Kitano, it's about a government-sponsored, survival-of-the-fittest experiment in which teenagers are isolated on an island and turned loose with weapons to kill one another. After inciting outrage in Japan, it played in Los Angeles and Rotterdam in early 2001 and seems destined for a US release soon.

SHOCK CINEMA spoke to Fukasaku in Los Angeles, where the American Cinematheque held a two-week retrospective of his films, including the great drag-queen crime caper *BLACK LIZARD* (1967) and the oddball MESSAGE FROM SPACE (1978) starring Vic Morrow and Sonny Chiba! But, more important, the program featured a number of war and gangster movies from Fukasaku's early directing days in the 1960's, when his nonconformist, amoral storytelling style was still in its formative stages, plus several of his "modern yakuza" movies from the late 60's and 70's, starring some of the great Japanese tough-guy actors like Bunta Sugawara, Ken Takakura, Rentaro Mikuni, and Tetsuro Tanba. It's in these movies that Fukasaku's off-kilter, haywire visual style emerged, the gunfire was fast and furious, and the blood ran freely.

SC: *BATTLE ROYALE* was a controversial book in Japan. What made you want to adapt it into a film?

Fukasaku: Well, there was a catch phrase on the band that wraps around the jacket of the book, which said, "42 high school students, all of them to die!" And in Japan, youth crime is a very big issue. So, this kind of shocking story about 42 students killing each other, with this kind of situation in Japan, I thought it would be a much talked-about film.

I saw three elements, also, at the same time. First of all, the characters in this story are all 15 years old; second, many of the youths who are committing crimes in Japan are around 15. And third, when I look back on my life, what really impresses me very much and what I still have a very strong memory of, is when I was 15, just prior to the end of the war, and right after the end of the war. So during such a short time span, there were these events taking place that left such a tremendous impression on me. The fear of death, the clearing out the dead bodies, the collapse of Japan, and disenchantment toward adults. All these three elements came together, and I felt that if all these elements worked in a very good way, it would make an interesting movie.

SC: In your movies, violence is like a cancer, it keeps spreading and there's no stopping it. How did you first become interested in studying violence through your films?

Fukasaku: First of all, I'd like to say I was also 15 years old when I became interested in film. Up until then, my eyes were blindfolded; we were not allowed to go into

the movie theater — if we did, we were expelled from school. Foreign films were not allowed because of the nationalistic effort to win the war. Then, all of a sudden, all these bans were lifted and I came to see films. And when I looked around, the country was just razed by the entire war — all the burnt-out surroundings. And also, up until that time, the first 15 years of my life, Japan was in war all the time, and so we were told what role we

had to play as men. Now this period, which was called the "15-year war," ended and I started looking at films that I enjoyed. However, violence remained inside of me, as a result of the experiences of my youth. And that grew bigger inside of me, and I think it took about 10 years before I became involved in making films. Through this process, violence became an element in me, and also in my filmmaking — so close to myself that I could not really separate it from me by the time I realized I had made so many violent films.

Of course, there are many sides to film — love, romance, musical, melodramas, action films — and I was attracted to so many genres. However, the nucleus is violence in me.

SC: One reason *BATTLE ROYALE* is so disturbing is that it depicts innocent children turned to savages. What do you think the film says about kids and adults today?

Fukasaku: I'd like you to look at this film as a sort of fable. What would happen to human beings when they are all of a sudden put in a violent situation like this? The year after I was born, Japan went into war with China, which lasted for 15 years, but four of those 15 years, Japan fought against the world. So the war, the situation created by war, was a very routine, daily event for me. And then, all these people who could [be drafted] decreased in number, and students were graduated prematurely in order to be enlisted to

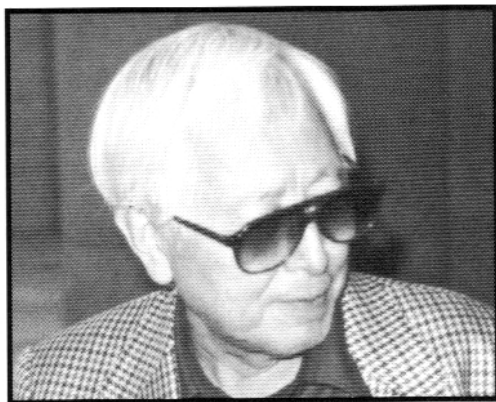
fight for the country. And the recruiting age went lower and lower. Conscription age was 16, and we spent a year working in the military factory making weapons. If you could persevere after one year in the factory, then you could go to the war. And that was the situation. Since that was the munitions factory, of course it was the target of naval bombardments; we'd get hit, and people would die every day. I wasn't afraid of death, but I didn't want to get hurt and feel pain; I wanted to be killed swiftly. Since the Allied forces were so close to Japan, I thought they would be landing in Japan sooner or later, and so I thought I would try my best to kill one or two enemy soldiers and then I'd kill myself. So this movie is like a daydream, a fable, thought up by a man who went through that kind of experience. Depending on the audience, it may be very displeasing. Some people may be nihilistic about it, saying, "human beings really are that way," and others may despair over it. Some young students may think that death is better than this.

SC: Your work on the *BATTLES WITHOUT HONOR AND HUMANITY* films is well known, but I was even more blown away by *GRAVEYARD OF HONOR AND HUMANITY* (Jingi No Hakaba, 1975), which was shown as part of the Cinematheque's retrospective. The main character (Tetsuya Watari) is a complete psychopath who goes over the edge — he ignites a gang war, stabs his gang boss, steals from friends, becomes a junkie, falls in love with a prostitute, eats her bones when she dies, and then commits suicide by jumping off the prison rooftop! It's an amazing movie.

Fukasaku: That film is based on the life of an actual gangster who was living in Japan after the war. We used the marital registry, court records and actual yakuza interviews in our research. The yakuza believe they should protect the members of their own group, even if it means losing their lives. So the other yakuza groups felt very eerie about this character, who was unexplainable to them. I think it's the same in the US or Japan — gangsters want to show off to their women, or their colleagues, that's the common thread. But this particular gangster was not that kind of character.

I had various ideas, and I vacillated about making this film. I was not sure it would be of interest to the audience. However, I traced all the things he went through, and it was strange how the events of his life were bewitchingly

attractive. I could have inserted things from the "cool" side of yakuza life, but it wouldn't have been true, so I only portrayed things that actually happened. Of all the yakuza films I made, it seems this one and *BATTLES WITHOUT HONOR AND HUMANITY* are the two most popular, and I still hear comments about them.



Director Kinji Fukasaku



Kunie Tanaka & Tetsuya Watari in *GRAVEYARD OF HONOR AND HUMANITY* (1975)

SC: In traditional yakuza movies, the story was usually about the "good" yakuza vs. the "bad" yakuza, but in your "modern yakuza" movies from the 1970's there really is no moral center. Why?

Fukasaku: There's no real good or evil in the world; that's what I always felt when I was growing up. I really felt it's very phony to categorize everything as good or bad. In the world of yakuza, there's no good and evil. I just wanted to portray the life of those yakuza who had no choice but to choose that kind of job, as it were, and they had to struggle in that kind of existence.

SC: So it's a non-judgmental portrayal?

Fukasaku: I can't have any kind of standards to measure what's good and what's bad.

SC: When I was a child, I used to watch *THE GREEN SLIME* on TV. It's so different from your other works.

Fukasaku: Why do you think it's so different from my other films?

SC: It's more or less a traditional sci-fi monster movie. Although it's about survival, so I guess it's similar to some of your other movies in that regard.

Fukasaku: Yes, that was my first so-called monster film that I directed, with American money and an American producer. Originally, I wanted to look for the meaning of the monster. This is the film, as you know, in which humans on Earth were affected by extraterrestrial life, whereby the humans transform themselves into monsters and then multiply. And I wanted to portray the process of this transformation from human to monster because in human beings, there are elements of monster — that sort of gets stimulated, and they transform themselves into monsters. But the producer objected; he said it was too literary or too highbrow, and he said, "please go with this other storyline." I was not happy with it, but I had to go along with it. You're not alone to say it was well received by people of your generation. I remember that when the producer told me the news that it was a hit, I had mixed feelings.

SC: *MESSAGE FROM SPACE* is sort of like *THE SEVEN SAMURAI* in outer space. Were you trying to make a Japanese *STAR WARS*, or did you have something different in mind?

Fukasaku: It wasn't that I was influenced by American sci-fi films, but I was aware that these films were a great hit in the US, and I wondered if a sci-fi style action film could be made in Japan as well. And so I took a piece of Japanese classic literature and I made that into *MESSAGE FROM SPACE*. In Japan, the story is called "Nanso Satomi Hakkenden" [a classic novel written by Kyokutei Bakin in the early 1800's, the apex of all Japanese Samurai literature, which tells the story of a tragic romance of a princess, and the adventure of eight heroic samurai and a heroic dog; it has been adapted into other books, manga, movies and anime countless times], and it's also based on a Chinese legend. Later on, I also had a remake of that same story, not in sci-fi but as an ordinary film.

SC: *BLACK LIZARD* is hugely entertaining. I like it because it's got the elements of a James Bond-type spy picture from the 1960's, but the focus is really on the characters.

Fukasaku: I made that film out of my own interest in how aesthetics could be expressed in film. That was a very aesthetic film, with a romance at the core of the story, involving two people in completely opposing positions, the detective and the thief. And I think part of me is very much into this kind of art, beauty, aesthetic side of filmmaking.

SC: *BLACK LIZARD* was originally a book, and



THE GREEN SLIME attack !

then it was a stage play adapted by Yukio Mishima. Which version is your film based upon?

Fukasaku: I was aware of both versions. The original story was written by a popular Japanese novel writer, Edogawa Rampo. The film was based more on the stage play. I saw the play and I enjoyed it very much, and I was so impressed how beautiful this actor was, Akihiro Maruyama [who stars, in drag, as the Black Lizard, a female thief], who now uses the name Akihiro Miwa. It was a week later that I got an offer from Shochiku to make a film out of this play, which was quite a coincidence. And I remember wondering what was happening, because I had just left Toei Studios and became a freelance director, and things were just going so smoothly in my career.

SC: How did you discover Akihiro Maruyama? I read somewhere that he started out as a cabaret performer or something like that.

Fukasaku: He was singing French chansons in a club called Gay Paris in Tokyo; he was more of a pretty boy. I heard him then, but that's not my main interest, so I wasn't terribly enthusiastic about that sort of thing, but I heard that Yukio Mishima was frequently in the audience. In the stage play, the part of the Black Lizard was not performed by Maruyama at first, but by an actress. Then, the first time it was made into a film, the role was played by Machiko Kyo [a stellar Japanese actress who appeared in *RASHOMON* and countless others]. Then, a little later, Akihiro Maruyama took over the role on stage, and the tremendous reaction from the audience was so different from when actresses had performed it. And afterward, other actors also did the role, but their performances couldn't live up to Maruyama's. And so, *BLACK LIZARD* was considered to be a kind of character that wasn't very effective if played by a female performer; a male actor was needed to create the right effect.

SC: You also directed a follow-up to *BLACK LIZARD*, titled *BLACK ROSE*, also starring Maruyama, which has never been released in the U.S.

Fukasaku: I really don't know, to this day, why *BLACK LIZARD* was a hit

and is still well liked. I'm kind of puzzled by it. But Shochiku came to me and asked me to come up with another, similar kind of project with Akihiro Maruyama. The screenplay was an original one.

To be honest, there were many other ways to shoot and photograph Maruyama in a much more beautiful way in *BLACK LIZARD*, but it took a long time to get it right with the makeup and lighting and everything, and we worked every day until very late. And the crew wasn't really with it, in terms of the direction I was taking in filmmaking. So, when we saw the completed film, I regretted that the beauty that Maruyama created was less than perfect, so I wanted to make another one with him, and I created a much more beautiful character the second time out. And the cameraman on this one was the *creme de la creme*, by the name of Takeshi Kawamata. If the script was a little bit better, the whole thing would have been much more interesting, but Maruyama really was beautiful, absolutely gorgeous. If you ever get a chance to see the movie, you'll know what I mean.

SC: Yukio Mishima makes a small cameo in *BLACK LIZARD*, in the gallery of dead "doll" people. Were you good friends with him?

Fukasaku: When I went to Mishima for [permission to make *THE BLACK LIZARD*], by then he was well into his right-wing political group that he had formed, Tate no Kai [the Shield Society]. It was not that big a deal in terms of power and the impact it had on society, but nevertheless he had established this group and he was the leader of it. He was very happy to accept my request to have his version made into a film. He was very much interested in films, and he had acted in some films. He had some kind words to say about my films as well, though I don't think he'd seen any of the good ones. In agreement for this film version of *BLACK LIZARD*, there was one condition. It was that he play one of the human statues in the film. He was very proud of his well trained, well built body, so he was very eager to play that role.

SC: I think one reason why people love *BLACK LIZARD* is the psychedelic look and feel of it.

Fukasaku: I think it was already 10 years after the play was written that I made the film. In the intervening years, there were different film versions of this story already produced. Therefore I had to come up with something that was different from the previous versions, so I remember discussing with the designers what we could do.

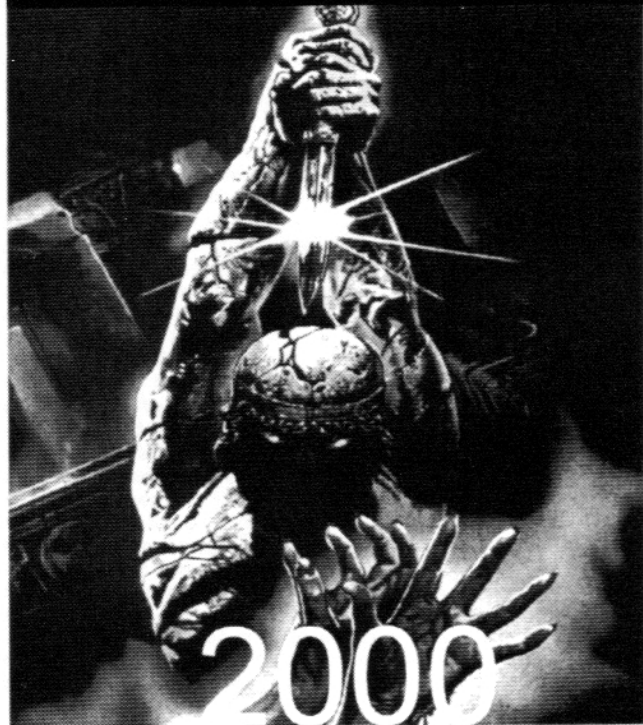
A year after *BLACK LIZARD* was made, I was visited by a newspaper writer from New York, who came all the way to see me. And he said he really enjoyed

BLACK LIZARD, but I had no idea why he had so many kind words for this film. I just thought that US film fans must have very weird taste! And when I watch *BLACK LIZARD* now, oh my God, I get a cold sweat just thinking what a lousy director I am! If I were to make this film now, with the same subject, I probably would be able to make it more beautiful and give it a more wondrous atmosphere. But I think I am more suited to films like *BATTLE ROYALE* and *BATTLES WITHOUT HONOR AND HUMANITY*, those kind of gory, grim films. I think that's more me. Ω



Bunta Sugawara in *BATTLES WITHOUT HONOR AND HUMANITY* (1973)

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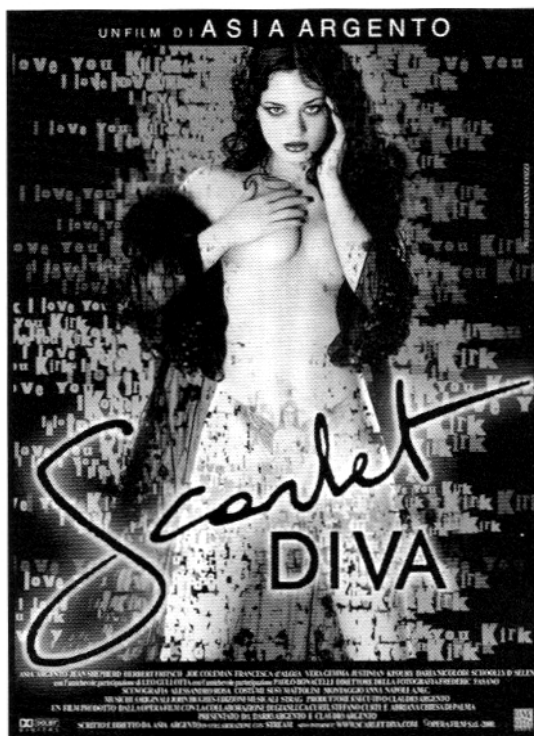
GERARD ALEXANDER; Australia.

CHOPPER (2000). Based on the nine volumes of autobiography by Mark Brandon "Chopper" Read, this debut feature by director Andrew Dominik was one of the most successful Australian films in decades. Detailing the fragmented and often fictitious memoirs of the notorious Chopper, it sways from extreme violence to quiet, reflective moments that capture the essence of a very complex individual. Eric Bana plays Chopper, in jail for various offenses in the 1970's. A petty argument causes Chopper to stab an inmate to death. Then he tells the victim he's sorry and asks if he can help. As Chopper expects retaliation on the inside, he gets a mate to cut his ears off, so that he will be transferred. Released from custody, Chopper finds himself at loose ends in the criminal underworld of the 1980's. He has few friends that he can trust and eventually they turn on him as well. His romantic life is more of a series of skirmishes, with his short temper leaving many a girl black and blue. His paranoia soon leads to more murder, shown three ways: the 'true' version of what happened; Chopper's excuse for his action; and the media hype version which glamorize the whole sequence of events. The film is certainly about the character that Chopper is, and about the way he is expected to be. He gives an interview from jail in which he apologizes for his acts, but then he explains that he never killed anyone that didn't deserve it. Eric Bana is known as a stand up comic in Australia, and his total transformation into this role entirely justifies his casting. He conveys the internal suffering of Chopper with some very subtle gestures and his ability to explode during the most serene settings is remarkable. Andrew Dominik has created a work that rewards revisiting and a film that can reach a wide audience. American viewers may find some of the authentic Australian accents impossible but I hope that the wonders of subtitling may come to the fore.

THE STRANGER (1965). This SciFi series made by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation from a script by G.K. Saunders was quite a breakthrough in its time. Shot on videotape and film, the b&w photography often echoed the look of film noir, which, considering the minuscule budgets allowed, was an impressive achievement. No directors were credited but I suspect producer Storry Walton had a major hand, as he went on to make many urban dramas for Australian TV. Originally presented as a serial in six parts, each 30 minutes long, the story begins with a man walking at night during a downpour. He arrives at the house of a High School Headmaster, knocks on the door and lies prone on the ground. The Headmaster, Mr. Marsh, lives with his wife and children, Jean and Bernard. Jean's friend Peter is there when the Stranger is discovered at the doorstep. The Stranger has no memory but speaks English in unusual phrases. Mr. Marsh wants to get a doctor, but the Stranger refuses, and he is given a cottage to stay in until he recovers. The Stranger adopts the name Adam Suisse and due to staff shortages in Mr. Marsh's school, gets a job teaching there. His students can't do anything he is not aware of however, because he can read minds. When Peter and Jean discover an odd transmitter hidden in Adam's cottage, and strange lights are seen in the skies at night, an interrogation is at hand. Ron Mattrick as the Stranger is suitably faced and relishes spouting his quirky sentences. The over-aged actors playing the teenagers are the one annoying element of an otherwise sober and thoughtful program that made for an enjoyable 3-hours of entertainment.

A CITY'S CHILD (1971). Monica Maughan plays The Woman in this intriguingly bleak Australian telemovie made with the assistance of The Experimental Film and Television Fund of the Victorian Council for the Arts. Directed with an appropriate lack of sentimentality by Brian Kavanagh, it details the dreary circumstances of the woman's life. Living with her abusive bedridden mother, the woman dresses in clothing befitting an old maid. Except that she's in her 20's. Every day she reads to her mother, who berates her over her cooking, her inability to play cards, and her

defense of her father, who was a failure. Upon the appearance of a cat in her household, mother has a heart attack and dies, not before telling her daughter that her father wanted a boy instead of a girl. The woman is now alone. She goes shopping, wary of making eye contact with people. The Man (played by Aussie heart-throb, Sean Scully) tries to befriend her in the shops but she runs away. He follows her in his car for a while, which understandably makes her jittery. She buys a Barbie doll for company and makes clothes for it from her own discarded garments. She talks to her doll and invites her to the beach, telling her how awful the city looks now that the trees have made way for all the new houses. Shot in the suburbs of Melbourne, the grainy haze of construction is always nearby. The woman buys Barbie a Ken doll and she treats them to a roast dinner. The man appears at her home and they begin to talk, at last. The woman has a wedding for Barbie and Ken, after which, Barbie has a baby (the birth is not shown). Keeping the baby in a cot, the Woman continues seeing The Man, or does she? Shot in soft focus, the montage suggests fantasy, but one day the woman faints in the street. A doctor examines her and finds her to be pregnant. The woman never sees the Man again. Truly a claustrophobic experience, this film doesn't hint at any redemption. Monica Maughan's performance is full of small nuances which demonstrate the discomfort of not fitting in and being neglected. I wonder what she's doing now?



DRIES VERMEULEN; Belgium.

SCARLET DIVA (2000). Contrary to what one might expect given her lineage and initial directorial effort in the horror anthology *DE GENERAZIONE*, Asia Argento's first full length feature isn't a scare flick but an occasionally embarrassingly personal reflection by the still youthful actress/directrix on her involuntarily imposed role as public commodity. A single bloodsoaked nightmare sequence serves as a tribute to dad, a courtesy she could hardly fail to include, especially since he co-produced this baby! Further defying criticism, she also stars and barely leaves the screen as Anna Battista, Italy's hottest (okay...), multi-award winning (ouch!) starlet du jour. So far, so self-indulgent. Detractors will find it difficult to make accusations of narcissism stick when the helmer/writer/star goes out of her way to paint herself as a fuck anything slut, unrepentant substance abuser and borderline psycho! Struggling to realize her pet project, the titular *SCARLET DIVA*, Anna has to contend with a randy U.S. producer (beefing up the film's comedy quota), a fawning if clueless agent and a pair of pansexual photographers who almost get her killed when they dope her up on Special K as a prelude to carnal liberties. Watch out for big breasted pasta porn princess Selen (from Joe d'Amato's *RAW AND NAKED*) as one of Anna's one night stands making a lusty pit stop on her way to the airport. These vivid snapshots from the everyday life of a media darling make for a frequently engaging though unavoidably episodic movie, pulled together in its second half by the injection of a love story between Anna and a self-important, platitude-spewing performance artist. The guy's an obvious fraud to anyone but our anti-heroine, who insists on creating her own illogical happily-ever-after when life won't grant her as much. The line between Anna and Asia fades away for a haunting, unabashedly kitsch-flavored ending as Argento's creative mind takes action, bending the turn of events so that the protagonist achieves not only romantic bliss but is (in a nose-thumbing move to the lady's naysayers) near-canonization as well.

SOUS LE SABLE [Under the Sand] (2000). A surprising change of pace for shock auteur Francois Ozon, following bourgeois facade-ripping fare as *SITCOM* and *REGARDE LA MER* [Look at the Sea], this minimalist masterpiece deals with love, loss and grief in a way that's never heavy-handed. Marie (Charlotte Rampling, making up for a too long absence from leading roles), an English Lit professor at a Parisian university, quite literally loses her husband (Bruno Cremer) while on holiday. She takes a nap on the beach as he's out swimming. When she wakes up, he's

disappeared. Accidentally or voluntarily drowned? Hiding perhaps from a stifling marriage? Ozon offers no solid answers yet focuses on Marie's denial of her husband's departure, as she resumes her professional and social life as if nothing had happened. While those around her assume she's slipping from sanity, the truth is considerably less tangible and far more nuanced. A tentative affair with the friend of a friend seems doomed from the start, leading to a shattering final scene, all the more heartbreaking for being open to any number of interpretations, none of them cheerful. Even though Ozon has clearly reigned in his wicked humor and morality-defying shock tactics, that fortunately doesn't mean that he's gone all solemn on us. The general lightness of tone might startle given the subject matter, plus there's even one astonishingly erotic moment when Marie imagines herself being groped by both husband and lover in a masturbatory fantasy. Ultimately this is Rampling's show however and very clearly intended as such. Hardly ever out of frame, she delivers the type of performance — both subtle and sensuous — that has been her stock in trade since she started enchanting movie audiences in the '60s, her mysterious beauty undiminished (if anything, augmented) by the passing years.

FOREVER YOUNG (1994). A rare departure from couples film blandness for Vivid, one of the biggest companies in the jizz biz, this oddity from one Austin Ellison (Harlan's boy?) turns out to be a remarkably faithful sexed-up adaptation of John Frankheimer's cult fave **SECONDS**. Hell, it even includes that movies' devastating, unflinching final twist. If you're not familiar with it, I'm not giving it away here. Trust me, you'll thank me in the morning. Instead of Rock Hudson one has to make do with Nick East as the newly upholstered incarnation of wealthy old E.Z. Ryder (!) proving that money can buy just about anything. In truth, East's not all that bad an actor if a little short on personality. A pre-boob job Asia Carrera fares better as the mystery girl he falls in lust with, their shared sexual footage being the undisputed carnal highlight of this glossy 35mm grope epic, beautifully shot by Ralph Parfait, son of longtime porn purveyor Ron Sullivan (a/k/a Henri Pachard). A touching non-sex performance by still radiant hardcore goddess Hyapatia Lee, easing her way out of the industry as the old geezer's embittered 'widow', is an added bonus. For a further dose of Ellison's idiosyncratic style, check out **BODY LANGUAGE (1995)**, an uncommonly lively vehicle for Janine "No Fly Zone" Lindemulder.

KANSAS CITY TRUCKING CO. / EL PASO WRECKING CORP. / L.A. TOOL & DIE (1977/78/79). Gay porn's only legitimate trilogy worthy of that name, a term usually reserved for highbrow arthouse fare (Kieslowski's **THREE COLOURS**) or as an attempt to add a semi-respectable sheen to money-grabbing box office bonanzas like **SCREAM**. These three Joe Gage classics are alternately referred to as the Kansas City trilogy by the director himself or the trucking trilogy by everyone else. They follow the evolving sexual mores and growing emotional needs of truck driver Hank, a landmark character in homo hardcore history and ditto performance by grizzled Richard Locke. If one were to subtitle each episode — surely the benchmark of the truly pretentious trilogy — then **KANSAS CITY** would simply serve as an uncomplicated paean to sport fucking without emotional commitment, **EL PASO** could go on record as a tribute to friendship and camaraderie between Locke and fellow trucker Fred Halsted (legendary director of **L.A. PLAYS ITSELF**), and it should be pointed out that these aren't fuck buddies as there's no sex between them save a few furtive licks at film's end. True love and all its pitfalls are covered in the final, most plot-heavy installment as Hank grapples with advanced age (subject matter rarely touched upon in the wish fulfillment world of porn) and a sudden attraction to traumatized Will Seager who lost his great love in Vietnam — cue tearful flashback of their last gasp farewell, complete with Seager's promise to love again! Holy Handbag, only the all male side of the XXX industry ever dares to get this schmaltzy and manages to do so with such disarming honesty that only the most hardened of cynics will feel compelled to mock rather than root for them two lovebirds to wind up together...Adhering to his time-honored trademark aesthetic, Gage fills each film with strong, masculine types straight out of Tom of Finland drawings, all ripped muscles and copious facial and body hair, who go about their business of reaming each other in a way that separates the men from the boys. The intense orgy sequences (with the director invariably joining in) that close the first two features and open the third tend to be particularly impressive. Plus there are quite a few surprises in store for anyone familiar with more traditional queercore such as the casual presence of women during several sex scenes or the delicate tenderness that lurks within these men's men. There are many subtle touches, enhanced by state-of-the-art cinematography and at times nearly avant-garde associative editing (study **EL PASO**'s opening threeway to see what I mean), that set this trio apart from MOR porn that listing them all would take up most of this mag's available space. Suffice it to say then that these crowning achievements to Gage's (as of yet) still largely uncharted career go a long way in redeeming porn from either side of the fence as a genre to be taken seriously from both a critical and sociological point of view.

Davey

The High School Experience

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evils of drug abuse (surprise!) & the benefits of abstinence. The best parts are when his hick upbringing shows through ("Ah luuuuhve bein' gross!"), as when he cacklingly describes scaring little kids with his appearance and causing a guy to crash a Dairy Queen where "ah nearly laughed what was left 'a mah face off!"

SURFACING (1980). Director Claude Jutra's **MON ONCLE ANTOINE (1971)** is widely considered the finest Canadian film of all time; he must've on crack, then, when he made this Margaret Atwood-based pretension-fest, as it definitely falls at the opposite end of the spectrum. It's a laff-a-minute psychosexual riff on **DELIVERANCE** with a woman traveling to the Alaskan wilderness in search of her father, who disappeared somewhere in the region. She makes the mistake of bringing along a lady friend and two horny guys, all of whom go bonkers by the time the trip is done. They meet a sadistic hunter (Michael Ironside in an early role) whom one of the dudes humiliates at gunpoint by forcing him to piss his pants. Later on, another of the guys tries to rape the heroine while reminiscing about a childhood encounter with a cat(?), and then forces her friend to dance naked around the hanging carcass of a dead bird. Not to worry though, as the protagonist, after discovering the fate of her father, decides that "I'm tired of focusing on death...There's life growing all around me!"

A PAGE OF MADNESS (Kurutta Ippeiji) (1927). An absolutely amazing artifact from Japan, as dazzling and revolutionary as **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** or **THE MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA**. Light years ahead of its time, it's about a woman incarcerated in a nightmarish asylum after attempting to drown her son; her husband spends his days doing odd jobs around the place and waiting for a chance to break her out — if he's not driven mad himself. The film, lasting a scant 60 minutes and intentionally devoid of intertitles, is a creepy, poetic drama of light and shadow, an impressionistic collage of disturbing imagery (more often than not shot through distorted lenses). This was one of the few early Japanese films to survive the fires of WW2 (the director stashed it away in a rice barrel at his country home) and in 1970 it was restored, complete with a superb avant-garde musical score that fits the images like a glove. An unforgettable portrait of encroaching insanity, and required viewing for all weird movie buffs.

GOLDEN BRAID (1990). Australia's Paul Cox (**MAN OF FLOWERS**) is among the most distinctive and eccentric movie-makers on the planet, and this is one of his strangest films. Based on a story by Guy De Maupassant, it's about a passionate love affair complicated by the fact that the woman is married and her mate is in love with a braid of blonde hair. Found in an antique dresser the guy is fixing up, the braid obsesses this nutcase from the start, inspiring a number of Lynchian hallucinations and causing irreparable damage to his relationships. I'm not exactly sure what happens at the end, which I found to be — like the rest of the film — gorgeously photographed, deeply felt (Cox couldn't make an impersonal film if he tried) and not a little pretentious.

THE VOYAGE OF TANAI (1975). An Italian-made curio based (so the film-makers claim) on an ancient legend about a kid who floats in a tiny raft from Polynesia to Alaska, guided (literally) by the Voice of His Ancestors. Said voice,

FRED HALSTED

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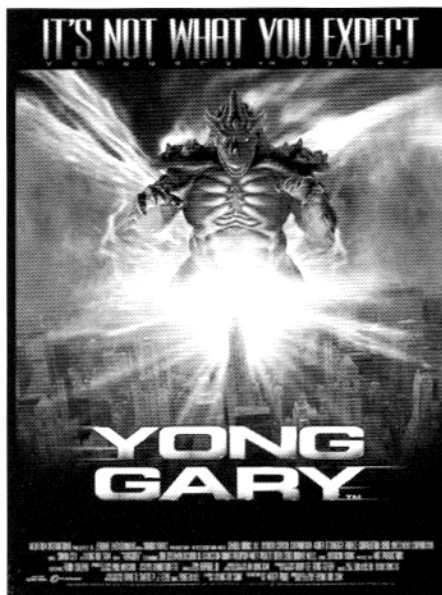
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sounding like a constipated Richard Burton, periodically speaks to Tanai on the soundtrack (nearly always beginning with "Now remember, Tanai..."), imparting advice on how to live off the sea. In the course of his journey, Tanai takes a sojourn at Easter Island, gets harassed by Filipino mud people and briefly shacks up with an old guy shipwrecked on a deserted island. It feels at times like a straightforward adventure saga and at others like a picturesque travelogue (complete with some mondo-type footage) but never really works as either. It does, however, contain the largest concentration of fish guts I've ever seen in a movie.



MILES WOOD; Hong Kong. YONGGARY (2000). The American version of GODZILLA has a lot to answer for, and it must undoubtedly shoulder some of the blame for inspiring director Shim Hyung-rae to bring Korea's most famous monster Yonggary — last seen destroying Seoul back in 1967 — back to life. The film, about aliens who revive the 200 million year old fire breathing dragon to aid them in their attempted conquest of the earth, was obviously created chiefly for the export market, being populated by a completely unknown cast of Americans who are required merely to do little more than express horror screaming clichéd lines such as "this can't be happening" every so often, and in the process robbing the film of any sense of

nationality. Yonggary itself is an inept CGI creation and just about the only entertainment comes from the amount of destruction caused by the air force, whose planes' missiles continually miss their target, blowing up buildings and presumably causing massive casualties instead. How much of this farrago was intended to be taken seriously and how much was intended as self-parody is questionable, but the end result must be considered quite an embarrassment considering it was at the time the most expensive Korean film ever made. The version under review, which screened at the Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival, is presumably the re-edit, making one wonder quite how bad the original cut, released to disappointing box-office in Korea back in 1999 must have been. One shudders to think!

TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED (2000). This big screen version of the TV series "Amazing Stories" (not to be confused with the Spielberg produced US series) is essentially Japan's answer to TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE. Intended to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the show, and bring to fruition concepts it was considered impossible to do on the small screen, its immediate flaws are all too apparent, mainly that none of the four stories feel at home in a theatrical setting. The opening tale "One Snowy Night" by PARASITE EVE director Masayuki Ochiai, about survivors of a plane crash attempting to survive Arctic conditions until a rescue party can reach them is the most horrific of the quartet, but the poorly CGI rendered crash and the artificial looking sets dissipate its effectiveness. The central two stories "Samurai Cellular" and "Chess" are like lesser "Zone" episodes, mere trifles, while the finale, "The Marriage Simulator" in which a young couple experience a "virtual marriage" is probably the most affecting of the bunch. The linking segment is perfunctory at best, making this a generally forgettable compendium.

RING (1995). Three years before Hideo Nakata scored a hit all over Asia, Chisui Takaigawa directed this adaptation of the best-selling horror novel by Koji Suzuki, whose stature could probably best be described as the Japanese Stephen King. The basic story is essentially the same: A reporter (Katusnori Takahashi) links several mysterious deaths to a strange videotape which he discovers to his own peril when he watches it predicts the viewer will die. While there are some cosmetic differences — the reporter here is male rather than female, and Sadako's (Ayane Miura) demise is slightly different — it is surprising, especially considering the amount of flak Nakata received for being unfaithful to the book, how similarly structured the 1995 and 1998 productions are, suggesting the latter was sourced as much from the earlier film as from the original novel. While this small screen effort (shot on video but given a "film look") is considerably more explicit — complete with nudity — it lacks the power of the theatrical film, but works well enough to be recommended, in the absence of an English-language translation of the novel, if only to see where the RING phenomenon all began.

GREG WALTERS; Tucson, AZ.

GHOSTS THAT STILL WALK (1977). A boy is possessed by an Indian spirit that his archaeologist mother found in the California desert. The mother is driven insane by the spirit. His grandmother takes the boy to a psychiatrist and then we get the rest of the story in a flashback. Influenced by the PSYCHIC KILLER and DEATH CURSE OF TARTU, the wooden acting in this turkey has to be seen to be disbe-

lieved. The grandmother is one of the worst actors in any movie bar none. She makes the actors in PLAN 9 seem acceptable. Best part for me was the scene in which rubber boulders attack an RV traveling in the desert in which the boy's grandparents are riding in. Directed by James Flocker, the man responsible for THE AMAZING WORLD OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA and related documentaries

DOCTOR, I'M COMING (1970). Dr. Peter Phallic is a doctor who runs a clinic that studies nymphomania in this early US hardcore feature, notable as supposedly being the first hard movie for the king, John Holmes. He appears as a government agent investigating the clinic. One of the patients sidetracks him, by thoroughly draining him of bodily fluids. Another patient tries to kill herself with a dildo. Director Rod Killy is actually Manuel Conde (TERROR AT ORGY CASTLE). A reel rarity.

THE DEVIL AND MR. HOLMES (1987). The last film that John Holmes made before his death of AIDS in March 1988, is another Faust saga made in Italy. John sells his soul to the devil in exchange for all the women he could ever want. These include an older Karin Schubert and Marina Frasese, along with American stars Amber Lynn and Tracey Adams. In addition to John, Euro-studs Christophe Clark and Jean Pierre Armand explore all four women in the climatic orgy. Although John occasionally looks spaced out, you would never know that he only had a few more months to live. Long live the King!!!

DANDELIONS (1974). Rutger Hauer stars in this softcore German drama about a sailor who loses his girlfriend to another man and then gets involved with sultry Dagmar Lassender, who doffs her clothes at every opportunity. Along the way he reconciles with said girlfriend and ends up accidentally killing Dagmar after she discovers Hauer screwing the girlfriend. It's interesting to see Hauer in an early role such as this, considering the art house success of TURKISH FRUIT the year before. Adrian Hoven (MARK OF THE DEVIL) directs.

PERVERSE (1976). Another fantasy porno from Caroline Joyce (a/k/a Claude Pierson), this concerns a man who gets married and takes his bride to his ornate mansion in the country for the honeymoon. After they fuck, he goes off to work the next day. Before leaving, he tells her not to wander around the various rooms in the house. To make the point, he takes a key and locks it in a desk drawer. Naturally, she can't resist, and breaks into the drawer and gets the key. The first room she encounters has a good looking black woman masturbating. She joins her for a sensual lesbian scene. The next room she wanders into has a threesome going on which she joins in on. This goes on for awhile until the pièce de résistance; a full scale orgy which includes a black dwarf who whips our heroine silly. At this point, she wakes up realizing all of the above was just a dream. Definitely one of the best French porno movies around.



MONTE MORGAN; Johnson City, TN.

BABY FACE NELSON (1957). This is bleak, baby, and tough as day-old steak. Director Donald Siegel has again orchestrated bursts of criminal behavior to the staccato beat of a wailing sax. BABY FACE NELSON is no romanticized, cooler-than-thou BONNIE AND CLYDE, but a reel, brutal cry from the heart of an original gangsta. Romantic comedy it ain't. If anyone made movies with a lower bullshit quotient than Don Siegel, I am unaware of it. While not always masterly (JINXED comes to mind), Siegel's stuff was usually spare and uncluttered — a clean assemblage of well controlled individual scenes building and contributing relentlessly to a focused story. No fat, only lean. Like a groovy mid-period Elmore Leonard novel. And, to my mind, Siegel would have been the ideal adapter of the oft cinematically abused Dutch Leonard. I am not certain how closely the life of Lester M. Gillis (a/k/a Baby Face Nelson) parallels the film. I imagine not very closely. I started to research

a bit but could not see how it would make any difference. As entertainment the film works just fine; as biography I could not care less. Regardless, Mickey Rooney, yes Mickey Rooney, plays Baby Face as a hot-tempered little hardass just cruising for a fight. Any fight. He gets under your skin with a very caustic, unsettling performance — strutting, snarling and popping caps in somebody with equal aplomb. Baby Face is, for the most part, rendered a sullen tantrum-throwing child, not unlike the momma-loving Cody Jarrett of *WHITE HEAT* infamy. For Rooney, this was probably the last in a series of gritty, low budget noirs done for a variety of producers throughout the '50s. When, riding the coattails of his earlier fame as child actor, he was able to find steady work in pretty good programmers like *THE STRIP*, *THE LAST MILE*, *QUICKSAND*, and *DRIVE A CROOKED ROAD* and prove himself an unjustly neglected actor. Not the joke he seemed to become later in his career. Give the man his due, after all, any guy who looks like him and can still bed a young, triple-hot Ava Gardner has got to have something. Know what I'm sayin'? Find it. Watch it.

THE MOB (1951). Honest cop Johnny Damico's got a problem. He must infiltrate a nasty waterfront mob to save his job. It seems a sleazeball named Blackie Clegg has been cruising around paying some blood debts and Johnny got in the way. Poor Blackie. Johnny's a marchin' home... Ever reliable in a number of serviceable B-films, Broderick 'Big Daddy' Crawford takes his turn as a cop out for redemption. He's by turns gruff, tough, amusing, and likeable playing the incorrigible Johnny D as a blustering man-child. Sweet enough for the dames and too bad to bother. He develops an easy rapport with Richard Kiley, his reluctant compatriot, who may be something besides what he seems. Kiley is smooth and wry here; in no small part responsible for much of the pic's wit and sophistication. Also on hand, for sex appeal, are familiar faces Ernest Borgnine and Neville Brand as a pair of wicked mob lackeys with a murderous jones for meddling coppers. A particular highlight is watching the Big Daddy get around to smacking the greasy smirks off both ugly mugs. The coolest, most enduring aspect of this cheap b&w treat is the degree of brutality and violence on display. While not without welcome dollops of humor, the pics frantic bursts of mayhem are frequent, convincing and surprisingly graphic for the time. Everybody involved gets carried away and busts heads — to the extent it's often difficult to distinguish serious-minded cops from fun-lovin' criminals, but maybe that is the whole point. Call it a tiny dose of social commentary, if that's your bag, or just chalk it up to hard living by the law of the urban jungle. Before I fade out I gotta give props to underrated, low-budget director Robert Parrish, who unfortunately toiled his entire career in the shadows. As with *SADDLE THE WIND* and *CRY DANGER*, he again proves enough of a clear-eyed visionary to overcome fiscal limitations — fashioning a rough-and-ready, action-packed tale of crime and punishment in an America long since faded into black and white cable-TV dreams. Mostly black.

CHRIS BARRY; Naperville, IL.

PEPPER - AGENT 00X (1973). PEPPER starts off hopeful enough with a montage of various body parts in close-up — pouting lips, naked backs and stomachs, thighs, calves, shots of bodies grinding on a bed in a room that's color scheme is early American porno — but degenerates quickly into eye-drooping monotony. This soft exploiter was actually called *CHECKMATE* when it first hit drive-ins back in the early '70s. Directed by Lem Amero, who was known for his more ambitious mid-70's to early '80's hardcore projects like *EVERY INCH A LADY* (1975) and *BLONDE AMBITION* (1981), PEPPER falls questionably into the action/thriller genre but with a whole lotta copulating going on. Even though Diana Wilson looks like a foxy cross between Shelley Hack and Bridget Fonda, she plays Pepper Burns as a horny, low, low rent Angie Dickinson. She's an international spy/slick private dick who'd rather get between the sheets than solve crimes. But part of her job is seduction and her latest case involves an Asian plot to overthrow the world with the threat of nuclear annihilation. Asian scourge, Madam Chang (An Tsan Hu), uses a variety of big-boned bimbos to seduce horny diplomats from France, Italy, Russia, and the US to retrieve a set of keys that, when inserted into a computer in Washington D.C., will stave off a nuclear missile strike. Agent Pepper is called in to make sure she gets at least one of the keys and, after nibblin' the US diplomat's knob in Madam Chang's bedroom, she steals the key she needs. Just as the world is about to go up in a mushroom cloud — Pepper sticks the key in the computer, saving humanity from extinction. Stupidly complex and overtly unerotic, PEPPER's cinematography was done by Roberta Findlay of *SNUFF* fame, but without any of the tasty sleaze of *THE TOUCH OF HER FLESH* or *BABYLON PINK*.

THE YUM YUM GIRLS (1976). Directed by Barry Rosen, *THE YUM YUM GIRLS* starts with a dated but kind of cool opening credits sequence by flashing still photos of models during their shooting sessions. There's no music as the credits glide into the frame under the sound of a clicking camera. It's a surprisingly effective minimalist approach punctuated by a girl running in slow motion through a meadow clutching a suitcase, giving the misguided impression that this may actually be an art film. Our fears are soon put to rest as the clichés run rampant in this bottom of the barrel exploiter that probably wouldn't garner a PG-13 rating today. The girl with the suitcase (Barbara Tully) is running away from home to go to the big city to become — you guessed it — a model. In the meantime, she gets a job as — you guessed it — a waitress. She meets a photographer at the zoo and he offers to help her put a portfolio together free of charge. The rest of the movie is done vignette style with Tully getting her picture snapped by the photographer then changing her

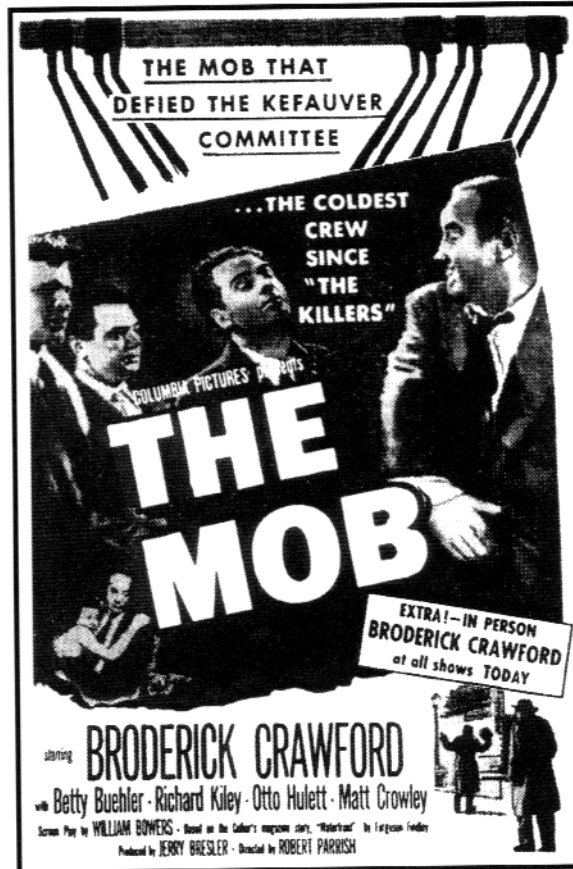
clothes in a dressing room with a bunch of other aspiring models changing their clothes. And that's pretty much it. Hack bleach blond bombshell Judy Landers makes her screen debut as one of the models. She spends her time hanging out in the changing room by either a) taking off her bra to release her silicone pumped mammarys or b) pulling her bikini bottoms out from between her butt cheeks — which aren't bad activities and provide the movie with a few much needed climactic arcs. Tanya Roberts also makes an appearance as a model with an attitude — cynical, chain smoking and dim. Somewhere along the line Tully meets a guy in a bar who sweet talks his way up to her apartment. Turns out he's a psycho and proceeds to beat and rape her. *THE YUM YUM GIRLS* turns into a morality play expounding the dangers of New York City, predating *LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR* by a year.

THE SEX AND VIOLENCE FAMILY HOUR (1983). I've never been a big Jim Carrey fan and, up until recently, couldn't put a finger on why I find him so repulsive. I've succeeded in avoiding just about everything starring the emotionally stunted actor. I never watched *LIVING COLOR*. Never caught *ACE VENTURA*. And who wouldn't rather watch videos of the real Andy Kaufman than Carrey's vanilla imitation in *MAN ON THE MOON*? However, nowadays, by default, you simply can't avoid him. But even back when *ACE VENTURA* came out, Carrey's familiarity eluded me, yet I knew I had seen him somewhere and it wasn't a pleasant memory. It seems my repugnance to Carrey stems from 1983 when I somehow came across *THE SEX AND VIOLENCE FAMILY HOUR*. It's a *GROOVE TUBE* inspired rip-off — 60 minutes worth of cocaine-fueled dreck about two schlubs

trying to sell a TV show to studio executives around the world. The Canadian production is basically a series of depressing vignettes that somehow make Benny Hill seem like high comedy — and I like Benny Hill. In one short, Carrey plays an Alistair Cooke character chasing some bimbo in a French Maid costume around a chair. In another, he plays a feeble Ronald Reagan in between badly shot, mind-boggling stripper sequences. Amazingly, his career hasn't evolved very much since *THE SEX AND VIOLENCE FAMILY HOUR* — Carrey's 'acting' is still based on over ripe, dismal bodily and facial contortions while he tries to 'prove' himself as a serious thespian. Directed by Harvey Frost, the tape also stars Murray Langston, whose dubious claim to fame was showing up on *THE GONG SHOW* with a bag over his head credited as the Unknown Comic back in the sick, sick '70s.

VINCE CONSERVA; Garden City, NY.

STEEL (1980). *THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN* made Lee Majors into a bonafide TV-action star during the 1970's. At the decade's end, he was ready to make the bionic leap from the small to the large screen. It never quite happened, even though *STEEL* is a fine flick that delivers the goods. Big George Kennedy plays Big Lew Cassidy, a ramrod who builds 'em tall, fast and right. He's a hands-on type of guy too. We know this from the get go because he drives his own limo while the chauffeur sits in the back and enjoys a brew. When Big Lew takes a swan dive off his work in progress, it looks as though the 40-floor super-structure is not going to happen, which makes the late Lew's brother (Harris Yulin) happy as heck, because he pockets the money and keeps the steel girders. Enter Jennifer O'Neill, who's just as tough as her daddy Big Lew, and she's going to get the job done, no matters what it takes. Old-timer (and Oscar winner) Art Carney tells her she'll need the crew to end all crews to finish the job on schedule: Nine floors in three weeks! The film then shifts to a sort of *DIRTY DOZEN*-esque scenario, as Miss Cassidy starts by getting the best of the best, Mike Catton. Majors plays the cowboy-hatted Catton (who is secretly gunshy of heights!), and as the new ramrod, starts hand-picking the next



team. And what an eccentric bunch they are! There's bad-ass Robert Tessier as an Indian, Albert Salmi as the crane operator, Terry Kiser as a casanova type, Richard Lynch as the troublemaker, Roger Mosely and Hunter Von Leer as two iron hangers, and even R.G. Armstrong as a double crosser! Will these boys make the deadline? It seems dicey at best — there are lots of explosions, accidents and subterfuge to make matters interesting. Even Catton has to fight inner demons...Majors was the executive producer, and the director's chair was filled by Steve Carver (*BIG BAD MAMA*), who keeps the pace moving at a brisk clip. He also induces a sense of vertigo during some of the tense high-rise scenes. Also of note is the fact that there is almost as much aluminum on display as there is "steel," because there are cans of Miller High Life in virtually every scene — in bars, in moving trucks, on the ground, even on the job! The cast is great and the action is swift; add that offbeat plot and you have a winner. Add'l note: The film is dedicated to stuntman A.J. Bakunis, who died performing the incredible leap at the beginning of the movie.

THE PATRIOT (1986). No, not Mel Gibson's historical epic, nor last year's non-theatrical Steven Seagal actioner, this is a mid-80s "Crown International Pictures" release. The plot is straight from the Reagan era. Terrorists steal a nuclear weapon, and it's up to hard-drinking, hard-living ex-Navy man Ryder (Gregg Henry) to save the day. After a nifty heist scene during the first ten minutes, things slow down a bit. Ryder wants to know who killed his friend on the ocean floor, so he agrees to work for the government one more time. Leslie Nielsen returns to his B-movie action roots as Admiral Fraser and *GREASE*'s Jeff Conaway acts nervous. Also on hand is Ryder's ex-love interest Sean, played by Simone (*DEATH RACE 2000*) Griffith. Michael J. Pollard even shows up too, and plays "Twister" with a cheerleader! Numerous fights ensue, and there's a nice Frogman-style showdown...What's really strange here is seeing Gregg Henry as a scuba-diving action hunk. Henry is a good actor and has seen it all — B-movies (1978's *MEAN DOG BLUES*), A-pictures (*BODY DOUBLE*), Tele-Films (1987's *BATES HOTEL*), as well as films where he's in the background and has no dialogue (DePalma's *SCARFACE*), so his casting is a nice change of pace. Fans of Griffith won't be disappointed either; she looks great! If there's one thing that makes this picture just another sub-par RAMBO-clone it's the villains, who're played for laughs at times, which doesn't work. Would you be afraid of two inept clods who dance to synth music together? At least their own boss puts them out of the action before Ryder does. Additional note: Kane "Jason" Hodder was onboard as a stuntman.

MORTUARY (1981). During the late-'70s and early-'80s, slasher films were all the rage after the box-office mega-successes of *HALLOWEEN* and *FRIDAY THE 13TH*. Budgets could be kept to a minimum, casts usually favored one or two genre vets, and endearing holidays were transformed into bloodbaths. It was a recipe for big-time ticket sales, and while some horror critics savaged these slice-'n'-dice epics at the time, many fans continue to discover (or re-discover) this sub-genre. *MORTUARY* is a pretty slick and nasty effort indeed. *THE WALTONS'* Mary McDonough plays Christie, a young girl who may or may not have seen her father murdered by the family pool. She suffers from bad dreams and sleepwalking — is she crazy? Or is there really a madman wearing ghoul-makeup and a cape running around town? Of course, there's a sexually-repressed psychopath on the loose, otherwise we wouldn't be treated to grisly embalming scenes in graphic detail. When Christie's boyfriend Greg, played by David (HUMONGOUS) Wallace, spots a cult-like ceremony at the local mortuary, with the head mortician (Christopher George) conjuring up the voodoo, this leads to Greg's bud getting an impromptu lesson in how to be a corpse in no time fast. Meanwhile, Christie's mom (Lynda Day George) tells the kids that everything's OK! All of these clock-and-dagger goings-on leads to a non-stop chase that lasts the entire last reel. And best of all, we have (pre-stardom) Bill Paxton as Paul, the mortician's creepy son. He tries to get a date with Christie, and likes to 'skip' in the local cemetery! Now, if the graphic murders don't scare you, the roller disco scenes will surely separate the Men from the Boys. Overall, an entertaining and decidedly creepy affair. And how can you not admire a film that pays special thanks to "Easson & Eason Mortuary Science" in its end credits?!

TOM FITZGERALD; San Francisco, CA.
THE DIVINE MR. J [a.k.a. The Greatest Story Ever Told]; The Thorn (1974). This limp lampoon of the Gospels is absolutely dreadful. God is a hippie Harpo Marx. The Virgin Mary is played by a then unknown Bette Midler doing some tedious Mae West shtick. The Three Wise Men are two campy queens and a black militant. John the Baptist is a flasher baptizing followers by spraying 'em with holy water from a seltzer bottle. JC lives in the suburbs and miraculously materializes loaves of Wonder Bread. "The Wide World of Christians" televises his crucifixion as hawkers sell souvenirs. Finally, in a lame attempt at profundity Leonard Cohen's "Suzanne" closes this inept, amateurish cock. There isn't one humorous moment in this spoof which sat on the

shelf for three years 'til the director decided to cash in on The Divine Miss M's growing popularity. To attract her bathhouse devotees, he re-titled it and in gay newspapers promoted her bit part as a starring role. After suffering through it, I've realized some films should probably be left in oblivion. Did I mention this SUCKS!

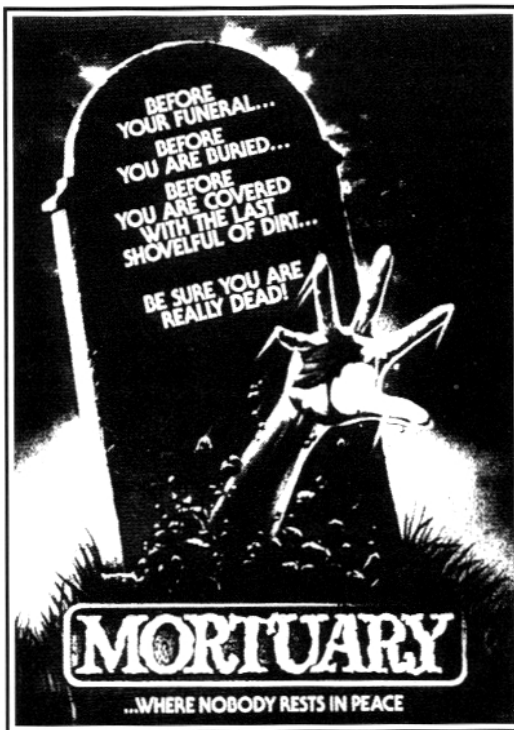
(THE SECOND COMING OF) SUZANNE (1974). Cohen's moody ballad returns as the inspiration for this ham-fisted hunk of hippie cinema. A four-star psychedelic bummer written and directed by Michael Barry, son of B-movie veteran Gene Barry, who flipped the bill for his kid's vanity project. An egotistical and manipulative underground filmmaker has assembled his freaky film crew (including Richard Dreyfuss and future director Penelope Spheeris) for his experimental re-

telling of the story of Christ. He casts the spaced out flower child Suzanne (Sandra Locke) as JC to symbolize innocence lost or something. During the shoot, the megalomaniac creep harasses a terrified extra with his camera until she breaks down in tears. When the press arrives on the set, all the crew members pull guns on them and (symbolically?) pull the trigger. This degenerate version of *Godspell* ends with the crew acting like a Manson family mime troupe and driving real nails into Suzanne's flesh. An unpleasant, queasy bad trip with a seventies poetry book aesthetic. You know, soft focus close-ups, sunsets, slo-mo birds. These lysergic montages were provided by editor Frank Mazzola (*PERFORMANCE*).

A COLD NIGHT'S DEATH [a.k.a. The Chill Factor] (1973). A cut above most TV movies, this ABC production is set at a remote research lab in the inhospitable Arctic. Scientists Robert Culp and Eli Wallach arrive to continue the project another researcher was doing before he mysteriously died. The experiments are on a group of super-intelligent monkeys to observe how much confinement, deprivation, fear and exposure to cold they can endure. Wallach is a rational, by the book scientist whereas Culp is more intrigued by the mysteries of nature. As the days of boredom and isolation go on and on, both develop a bad case of cabin fever. They begin to accuse each other of playing mind games when odd occurrences start popping up. Who left the windows open? Who trashed the food supply? Wallach is dismissive of Culp's speculations that something extraordinary is happening, instead chalking up their peculiar behavior to the high altitude. As tensions between the two ripen, the beleaguered chimps start protesting their abuse, leading us to the spooky, if not obvious conclusion. Both actors ham it up well in what occasionally feels like off-Broadway theater. Gil Mellé, veteran composer from B.J. LANG PRE-

SENTS to *THE NIGHT STALKER* series, provides an appropriately chilly score. His sparse, eerie electronics ominously counterpoint the continual howl of blizzard winds and screeching simians. Bleak, atmospheric and well worth seeking out.

FUTURE SHOCK (1973). You might have seen this jazzy and jarring educational flick in social studies class. Narrated by the ever overly verbose Orson Welles, this adaptation of Alvin Toffler's best seller begins by confronting us with a unsettling montage of contemporary bums. Car crashes, wars, civil unrest, and a menacing android couple in the woods. Welcome to the "plugged-in, clicked-on" New Society. More of a global shopping mall than village where the old traditions and institutions are dying out, leading us to an instant and disposable world run by those big, old "punch card" computer behemoths. The future is now. Can we keep up with all the rapid changes? Supersonic jets, test tube babies, flower picking robots, bionics, cryonics, facelifts, transplanted organs, and transient hitchhikers. As was typical in the early '70s, the film presumed a new civilization was emerging in a climate of strikes, equal rights and protests. By their estimation, right now we should all be living in group marriage communes with replaceable limbs and electric socket skulls. Not quite. But they pretty accurately predicted the hectic cyber world we've all been programmed to live with and even embrace. Composer Gil Mellé strikes again with a switched-on soundtrack of distressing, discordant sounds and jet set grooves.



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ANGELS IN DISTRESS
Vicious Mistress Candice/George Payne. AV01



BIZARRE STYLES
A. Sprinkle/V. Del Rio-G. Showers, F/F. AV02



DOMINATRIX WITHOUT MERCY
Vanessa Del Rio S/M. AV17



KNEEL BEFORE ME
George Payne, Annie Sprinkle. AV06



MANHATTEN MISTRESS
Joe Davian directs Erica Boyer. AV22



MASCARA
-Lisa Deleew, Mistress Candice, Roberta Findlay directs. AV23



ORIENTAL TECHNIQUES OF PAIN & PLEASURE
Annie Sprinkle/Mistress Candice. AV07



TAMING OF REBECCA -Incest, Golden Showers, Piercing. AV13



WICKED SCHOOLGIRLS Little Velvet Summers/toilet. AV14



PRISONER OF PLEASURE Long Jeanne Silver does sick specialty. AV10

ROUGHIE FEATURES



ABDUCTION OF LORELEI
Serena cola bottle violation. XF100



ANYONE BUT MY HUSBAND-C.J. Laing F/F-rare uncut version (fair quality.) XF188



CLIMAX OF BLUE POWER-cop impersonator debases hookers. XF101



FORCED ENTRY
Vietnam vet rape ram-page. XF25



HER NAME WAS LISA-Vanessa Del Rio, Samantha Fox. XF189



FEMMES DE SADE
Alex De Renzy's San Francisco epic. XF97



DEFIANCE
Teenage inmate defiled. XF14



HOT SUMMER IN THE CITY-Black militants defile lily-white virgin. XF29



INVITATION-XXX version of Bob Cresse's INVITATION TO RUIN-1st time on video! XF190



TONGUE-Bridgette Maier in XXX black actioner. XF70



WATERPOWER-Enema bandit in NYC. XF118



WOMEN'S TORMENT, A-Roberta Findlay directs! Female murder spree. XF119



MARIANNE BOUQUET-Janine Reynaud does hardcore. XF202



SWEET TASTE OF HONEY-Max Pecos' S/M epic. XF208



THE IMAGE-uncut version of Radley Metzger's Punishment of Anne. XF204



INTRUSION-Kim Pope in rape exploiter. XF108



LITTLE ORPHAN DUSTY-John Holmes in F/F sleazefest! XF99



JOY aka SEX CRAZY-young Sharon Mitchell is female rapist. William Lustig directs. XF33



LOVE SLAVES-Another hardcore sickie from Bob Cresse. XF110



MIDNIGHT HEAT-Jamie Gillis/hitman in hardcore film noir. XF191



TEENAGE SEX KITTEN-Rene Bond ravaged by hillbilly retards. XF66



SUBMISSION OF SERENA-Jamis Gillis & Serena XXX! XF192



SHARON-Zebedy Colt reprimands daughter Jean Jennings. XF113



TIFFANY MINX-Murder obsessions from Roberta Findlay! XF193



SEX WISH-Zebedy Colt lunatic rough sex/murder. XF56



LONG JEANNE SILVER-Female amputee/uncut version. XF109

SATANIC SICKIES



ALL THE DEVIL'S ANGELS-Psychiatrist's cult asylum. XF195



ANGEL ABOVE, DEVIL BELOW-Rene Bond/possessed pussy. XF196



BLUE VOODOO-Serena, Vanessa Del Rio sex magick/infantism. XF197



DEVIL INSIDE HER-Annie Sprinkle in crazed G/S rituals. XF15



DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND-Lucifer seduces nymphettes. XF198



DRACULA EXOTICA-Vanessa Del Rio in necromanaical thriller. XF199



LUST AT FIRST BITE-a.k.a. DRACULA SUCKS-Seka, Serena, Kay Parker. XF200



HARDGORE-Teen terrorized by hospital death cult/ necrophilia/castrations. XF26

EUROPEAN FEATURES



SEDUCTION OF AMY-a.k.a. PHANTASMES-Jean Rollin directs. XF207



FELINES, THE-Jess Franco star Janine Reynaud does hardcore. XF201



KINKY LADIES OF BOURBON STREET-Frenchman Frederic Lansac's horrific classic. XF203



PUSSY TALK-Frenchman Frederic Lansac directs Penelope Lamour. XF205



PENETRATION-a.k.a. FRENCH BLUE -Lasse Braun/Bridgette Maier. XF46



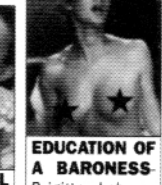
SENSATIONS-Lasse Braun/Bridgette Maier. XF206



FELICIA-Max Pecos directs Beatrice Hamois. XF211



SENSATIONAL JANINE-Virgin Orphan/Patricia Rhombert. XF209



EDUCATION OF A BARONESS-Brigitte Lahaye. XF210



DIVERSIONS-Banned British S/M Vampire Rape rarity. XF17



SECOND COMING OF EVA-Mac Ahlberg directs Bridgette Maier. XF52



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by TAVIS
RIKER

A pickin' and (occasionally) a grinnin', we arrive at the new millennium with a fresh batch of atypically 'across the board' offerings from the ever expanding world of mixed (up) media that ends up sharply relieved. Funny, the room we're watching/listening to our selections in is ever-shrinking, a common phenomenon amongst my other 'afflicted' friends (and you, perhaps?). Anyway, Onward!

A few columns ago we raved about the 'Special Bardot', and singled out the amazing duet "Comic Strip" with French pop icon

Serge Gainsbourg. Well, the folks at Polygram 'musique' video have put together a great compilation of 'videos du Serge', entitled **GAINSGOURG: DU POINCONNEUR...AU LEGIONNAIRE** (roughly translated 'some legendary hallmarks') [Eye TV, c/o Tony Pradlik, 14 Fieldstone Dr. #348, Hartsdale, NY 10530] which will have all you Francophiles worshipping at the eternally over-sexed/depressed shrine of the one and only Serge. The comp brings us an amazing mix of early b/w TV appearances, duets with mega-sexy **Jane Birkin** (yes, "Je t'aime moi non plus"), and later musical ventures — **FUNKY Serge** (with topless dancers dans le disco!) **REGGAE Serge** (the less said the better), and concert clips from '85 and '88. In the 'only en Français' category, check the duet with daughter Charlotte, "Lemon Incest", filmed on a 'Wagner meets Siegfried and Roy' bedroom set, with teenaged Charlotte in panties and wearing Dad's shirt!

Merci beaucoup! The earlier clips (and songs) hold up a lot better than the overproduced Eurodisco of later years, but with an ever-present cloud of Gitane smoke. (Seriously. Always.) And with that 'life is nothing, yes?' attitude throughout, Serge remains the ultimate lounge pop lizard. Bon appetit!

With **The Beatles** back on the 'toppermost of the poppermost' (and they wrote AND played their own songs! Hot Damn!), Cable TV fixture AMC had the good taste to lay **POP GEAR** (a.k.a. **GO-GO MANIA**) on us a little while back. Imagine an Alan Freed-style roundup of Britpop acts, filmed on Scopitone-style sets (but with a widescreen budget and future Kubrick cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth), bookended with the Fab Four. Now you're talking! The acts range from great (**The Animals**, **The Spencer Davis Group**) to 'now available for your wedding/bar mitzvah' (**Tommy** (forgotten very) **Quickly**). The soiree is hosted with equal parts ham and cheese by London DJ Jimmy Saville. (Look! it's Benny Hill meets

Bruce Vilanch! Commence regurgitation.) Top it all off with some smokin' Go-Go Gals in Gold Lame, guitars with 17 knobs and switches (not that they're plugged IN), and **Matt Monro** singing the theme song "Pop Gear" in true "From Russia With Love" style. So get your cable bill paid and keep the blank tapes handy for another showing of **POP GEAR**, baby (or, just look around on eBay or something)!

Our jones for rare music video led us back to the streets, and we scored with **THE DARIN INVASION**

(**VIEW Video**), a knockout 1970 variety hour featuring the one and only **Bobby Darin**. The production and style are similar to the amazing **SAMMY!** hour we reviewed way back when. With a full Vegas-style orchestra (and a funky troupe of backup singers), he comes out swinging with an inspired "Higher and Higher". And who better to sing a duet of "I Ain't Got Nobody" with a softshoe middle eight than **George Burns** (don't answer that)? One-hit wonders (?) **The Poppy Family** and **Linda Ronstadt** (who looks about 17) provide the requisite soft-rock interludes. Darin's energy and charisma hit their stride for the final production number, a great medley featuring "If I Were a Carpenter" and "Hi-De-Ho". Darin even out-Newton's Wayne with his multi-instrumental prowess on drums, guitar, and blues harp! And it wouldn't be 1970 without the anti-war anthem "Simple Song of Freedom."

Hang a search on "The Darin Invasion" (eBay, ibid) and get a solid hour of Bobby D. — thanks to Scopitone guru Gary Balaban for dealing me this mainline of vintage showbiz mojo! FYI, the 1973 "Mack is Back" NBC special is due out in July.

We hit the CD section with a big bang of a boxset, The long-awaited "**Richard Pryor: And It's Deep, Too!**" (**Warner Archives/Rhino**). This release has been getting a bit of attention, but unlike certain

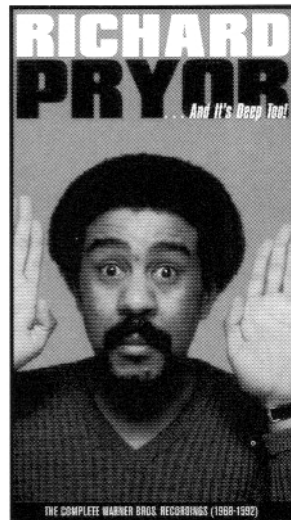
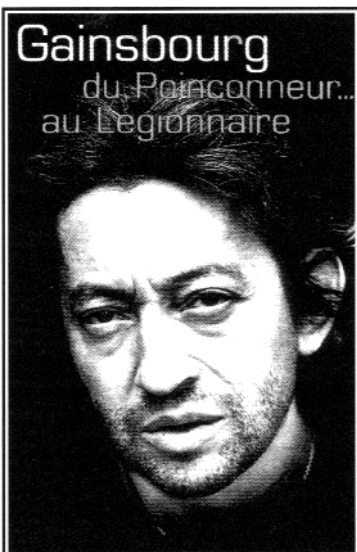
over-hyped box-sets tied to over-rated PBS mini-series about "Jazz," this actually deserves the spotlight. It just doesn't get better than this, folks.

All of Pryor's long out-of-print albums ("That Nigger's Crazy" and "Wanted: Live in Concert" are family favorites. Really.) are re-mastered here, along with a great career retrospect book and an extra disc of outtakes from various recordings. His outtakes are funnier than anything that Spike Lee's "Kings of Comedy" have ever done. Simply: The Master, boxed.

Last column we promised an "**Alien Love Child**" (**Favored Nations**). Well, this new CD from guitar master **Eric Johnson**'s new band has some "Area 51" excursions a la Jimi, and showcases the bluesier side of Eric's jaw-dropping playing. This is decidedly old-style ('60s-'70s) rock and blues, but delivered with no jive and well-intentioned nods to guitar voices past, and Eric's singular brilliance. See him live and you'll testify! Ex-Japan/Raintree Crow bassist **Mick Karn** has also been a semi-regular visitor to these columns, and his beautiful new solo disc "**Each Eye A Path**" (**Medium**) is yet another dreamy trip of drum/bass loops, hypnotic rhythms, and Mick's wild Middle-Eastern fretless bass (he sings and plays sax, too). Recommended.

In the 'sensitive singer/songwriter' department, the debut album from **Tom McRae** (**DB Records**) is an intimate collection of songs detailing painful breakups, isolation, and the "Language of Fools" Sounds like memory lane to me! Drawing from influences like Leonard Cohen and the darker side of Peter Gabriel, this is an assured and powerful work, anchored by McRae's haunting voice. Another fine effort in this mode is **Rufus Wainwright**'s sophomore release, "**Poses**" (**Dreamworks**). Like his first, this stunningly orchestrated album gives us Rufus' sarcastic/heartbroken persona in a series of songs ranging from his love of the Maysles Brothers' **GREY GARDENS** to his take on "California." In all, two albums for a quiet night with the one you love, or your drink of choice. In closing, another maverick musician hero of ours has passed — R.I.P. John Fahey. **Special Thanks:** Andy at (the late) Route 66 Records. Debi Zornes at Medium, and all at Big Hassle Media. **NEXT TIME:** Long lost PAL's from the 80's!

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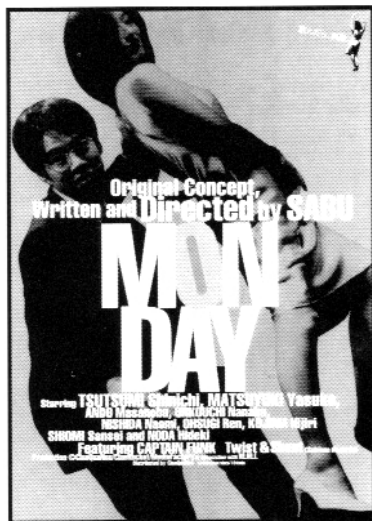
"Ground-breakingly gruesome.
The first erotic film for necrophiles!"

— John Waters

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NEW RELEASES



MONDAY (1999). Acclaimed for his earlier features, *NON-STOP* and *UNLUCKY MONKEY*, the latest from writer-director Sabu (a/k/a Hiroyuki Tanaka) is a brilliant and bizarre black comedy. Shinichi Tsutsumi stars as Takagi, an average salary-man who awakens in a cold sweat. It's Monday, and he's in a strange hotel room. Unable to remember how he got there, he digs through clues (matches, business cards, etc.), and as the pieces fall into place, it makes for a severely weird and dangerous flashback...His recollections begin at a funeral, where the mourners are suddenly informed that the corpse's pacemaker was never removed and when cremated, it'll explode! So guess who gets to open the body and snip the disconnect wire? Later, he meets a mobster's gorgeous mistress and gets invited back to the

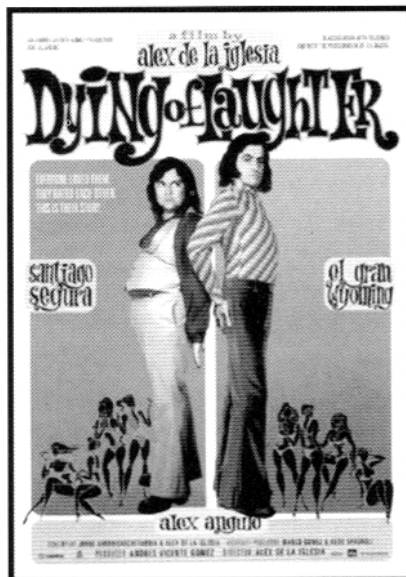
Yakuza's private nightclub. Once there, the liquor pours nonstop, and when the drunken Takagi accidentally discharges a shotgun, it initiates an orgy of violence. Meanwhile, Takagi sits in his hotel room, praying that these bloodcaked memories are all in his besotted imagination. But when Takagi turns on his TV, he discovers that he's the center of a police manhunt, and there's a heavily-armed SWAT team charging the building! Shit! There were fewer cops after *The Blues Brothers*! The story shifts and sputters, thrusting the viewer from past to present, and though about as deep as a cereal bowl, it's a riot to watch plastered Takagi lose his inhibitions and the grim misadventures that follow. Tsutsumi gives a remarkably nuanced performance and is always believable, despite his indefensible carnage. Sabu is a tremendously inventive talent, and he shifts gears superbly — from a comedy of errors, to a wild party, to an Asian *NATURAL BORN KILLERS* — and rams home a finale you'll never see coming. It's an absurd, daring and unexpectedly jarring gem.

DYING OF LAUGHTER [Muertos de Risa] (2000). At first glance, this new feature from Alex de la Iglesia might seem like a change of pace for the director of *THE DAY OF THE BEAST*. Sure, it centers on a popular comedy team, but it's also a spectacularly-sadistic romp. Santiago Segura and El Gran Wyoming star as Nino & Bruno, a legendary duo who put aside 20 years of tensions and reunite for a TV-special — only to murder each other in front of their studio audience! In flashbacks, we revisit their turbulent career, as overweight Nino and womanizing Bruno first take the stage in 1972. When the stagefrozen Nino receives a slap across the face by frustrated Bruno, the crowd roars, it becomes their trademark, and two new stars are born. But success has its drawbacks when you're as screwed up as these guys. They both vie for the affections of the same women and play hideous practical jokes, as their hatred of the other rises in direct proportion to their fame. Soon they're masochistically living next door to each other, digging through each other's trash (to learn who's more popular), faking raucous parties (to make the other think they're more beloved), and holding secret casting calls for new partners. As their paranoia escalates into madness, de la Iglesia proves that he's a master of pitch black comedy, as each exacts elaborately-sick revenge, including a frozen cat, a mother's death, a prison break, and a cataclysmic finale! Meanwhile, its '70s backdrop allows for plenty of eye-watering fashions and bad hair. There's even a Uri Geller cameo! Longtime de la Iglesia vet Segura is magnificent — transforming from fat schmuck to smug superstar — while Wyoming is the perfect, vengeful foil, along with Alex Angulo as their long-suffering agent. Gleefully tapping into the nether regions of show business dementia, out-of-control egos and ever-seeping emotional wounds, de la Iglesia emerges with a masterpiece.

DOWN 'N DIRTY (2000). I'm always up for a new Fred Williamson film, and this Po' Boy Production is a throwback to his grindhouse heyday. It's brutal, stupid, technically inept, and packed with no-nonsense macho shenanigans. Williamson stars as police detective Dakota Smith, whose partner is killed in the opening scenes. Fred

(who's rarely without his signature cigar, and has babes sticking to him like a glue-trap) is convinced it was a set-up, while the viewer is convinced it's just an excuse for another tired Renegade-Cop vs. Everybody-on-the-Take tale. At least Hammer rounded up a lot of familiar faces to join in on the quick paycheck, including Charles Napier as his frazzled Captain, Beverly Johnson as Hammer's love interest, Tony Lo Bianco as a dirty cop, plus Sam Jones, Bubba Smith, Andrew Divoff, and Frank Pesce. The biggest unintentional laughs are from David Carradine as a wealthy criminal shitbag (who never leaves the back of his stretch limo) and bleary-eyed Gary Bussey as a crooked D.A. who can barely read his lines. Working from a cardboard script by Aubrey Rattan, director Williamson barrels through his hokey tough-talkin' dialogue, while uncovering a deadly conspiracy that centers on Dakota. Soon, it's time for Hammer to "kick some ass and get some answers." Aging Fred is still impressively energetic, but this low-energy outing doesn't do him justice. Sure, it has all of the right elements, but arthritis has set in; along with a generic-funky soundtrack, anemic action scenes, idiotic plot twists, painful padding, and not a moment of originality. No question, I had a great time watching these exploitation icons still at work. I only wish they weren't stuck in such a sorry-assed project.

WILD ZERO (1999). This berserk new Japanese mindblower from director/music-video-producer Tetsuro Takeuchi combines big guns, hard rock, young love, pesky alien spaceships, Elvis pompadours, plus hordes of flesh-rendering, Romero-esque zombies. Are you looking for something with substance? Forget it! This is loud, fast, stupid, and damned proud of it! And without question, it's best enjoyed after chugging a couple six-packs of Sapporo. When a strange meteorite crashes in a small town, the dead begin wandering the roadside and tearing apart a weird array of supporting characters. There's also Guitar Wolf, Bass Wolf and Drum Wolf as a trio of ultra-cool, heavily-armed musicians, equipped with cool sunglasses, leather jackets, kick-ass wheels, and attitude to spare. Endo Masashi stars as a rock 'n' roll-wannabe named Ace, who inadvertently becomes Guitar Wolf's blood brother and is given a whistle that will call them if he's ever in a jam. After he saves a cute young thing named Tobio from being eaten by these cannibalistic creeps (and gets a rude surprise when it comes to sex), Ace summons Guitar Wolf to help out with these blue-faced fiends. Think of them as gun-toting Japanese Ramones-clones, crossed with MAD MAX. Thankfully, a sexy female weapons expert (who looks great as she blows away zombie scum while topless in her shower) provides all of the firepower they'll possibly need for its spectacular finale — as the surviving characters battle an undead army, and Guitar Wolf teaches the wimpy Ace to "believe in rock 'n' roll" and break through stodgy emotional barriers. Unapologetically silly, the 'script' zig-zags between outlandish, barely-explained subplots, while the outrageous FX take graphic zombie slaughter to a cool new level of CGI excess. Complete with guitar picks turned into deadly weapons, this comic-zombie jamboree might be a big dumb mess, but it's also a gloriously unrestrained blast of genre clichés, hilarious violence and an eardrum-busting soundtrack.



GANGSTER NO.1 (2000). Steeped in period atmosphere, ruthless violence and seething performances, this chilling new British gangster film avoids the self-consciously cool trappings of modern crime films, and instead pays homage to the character-driven days of pics like *THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY*. Though never reaching the heights of that classic, it's still a gritty ride, with director Paul McGuigan (*THE ACID HOUSE*) tossing in bizarre touches, yet always respecting the genre's roots. Malcolm McDowell provides the story's framework, as a rich 'n' successful, ever-nameless London "Gangster," reminiscing about his days as a young hood. Cut to 1968, with our long-haired gangster-wannabe played by Paul Bettany (since gristled McDowell certainly can't pass for 20-something anymore). *NAKED*'s David Thewlis co-stars as dapper Freddy Mays, the city's top mobster, who recruits this uncouth youth to be his newest leg breaker. With murder, torture and ambition as his petrol, our title thug becomes obsessed over Mays' "skinny fucking bird," Karen (Saffron Burrows, of *WING COMMANDER* infamy) and uses an erupting gang war to manipulate events for his own gain — from methodically dismembering a rival kingpin

(seen through the victim's slow-fading POV!) to possibly even betraying his own mentor. Only at the end do we return to the present day, with our aging Gangster getting an unexpected blast from the past. McDowell only appears in a handful of scenes, but he's always present in the flashbacks' voice-over, and though his character is an unlikeable shit, his drive to be No.1 (no matter who he screws over) is mesmerizing. Though its story occasionally loses focus, McGuigan pulls off some outrageous sequences, and it's recommended for any fans of gangland dramas — particularly those who wish they still made 'em like they used to.

SWIRI [a.k.a. SHIRI] (Video Junkie; 1999). This Korean action flick outgrossed *TITANIC* in its homeland, but it's a lot more fun than Cameron's overblown sludge. Populated with government agents, a deadly hitwoman, war-hungry militants, and loads of high-tech military hardware, it's a hard-edged, well-greased action machine. In fact, the intro alone has enough wholesale slaughter to fill an entire movie! One of North Korea's most ruthless killers is Hee, a female assassin with a



long list of high-ranking South Korean victims. Agent Ryu (Han Suckyu) is on her trail, following her latest string of corpses, but a larger concern arises when a shipment of deadly liquid explosive — enough to blow up a city — is hijacked by heavily-armed fanatics. Soon bombs are planted throughout Seoul, as Hee mercilessly murders anyone who might sabotage this terrorist operation, which culminates at a dignitary-packed North/South Korean soccer match. While a few of its subplots seem hokey (e.g. engaged Ryu still hasn't told his fiancée, Kim Yunjin, that he's a secret agent) the tightly-constructed script includes false identities, revenge, a possible traitor, and no shortage of unflinching violence. Though no

great work of art, it's tough, tense and has a surprisingly bittersweet finale. It even makes that cheesy clock-running-down-to-detonation cliché work for the umpteenth time. Director Jegyu Kang was obviously influenced by Hollywood fare, but doesn't fall prey to their cookie-cutter weaknesses. Delivering one adrenalinized action sequence or showdown after another, it's great to watch a smart, kick-ass flick that knows how to mix suspense, gunplay, carnage, and even a little bit of emotion.

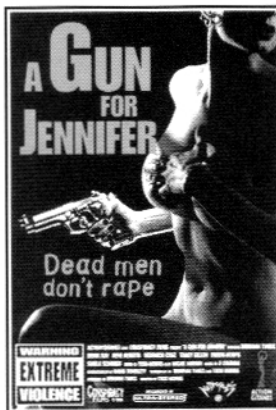
STEAL WHEELS (Sub Rosa Studios; 1999). So many indies embrace the horror genre nowadays that it's refreshing to find one that tries something different. In this instance, director Dan Weber creates a no-budget throwback to the grubby biker movies of the drive-in era. But instead of following a biker gang, its story initially takes a more realistic route. Gregg Giacobbe stars as Gion Bodine, a biker with a day job, a woman who loves him, and simple dreams of living life on his own terms. It's a different story for his scummy father, Trace (Tim Stone), who burgles cycle shops and hangs out with white-trash pals like coke-snorting Snake (Roger "Hype" Loper). But when Gion's pregnant wife is murdered, with Snake spotted as the culprit, hubbie seeks revenge and Trace joins him on the road. Along the way, the father and son bond, and even open their own used-computer business for some quick cash. What honest Gion doesn't realize is that Papa's selling these PCs to South American drug kingpins, who're using them to ship heroin! Meanwhile, Gion and his new biker pals form a vigilante gang dubbed The Revengers, who shove a syringe into a drug dealer's crotch, give some just desserts to a wife beater, and have the blessings of the local police force! Though technically dodgy, with rough sound and choppy pacing, Weber makes excellent use of authentic small town backdrops, along with genuine performances and a solid soundtrack. It also realizes that not all bikers are outlaws — they're family men, ex-policemen, as well as low-IQ'd dirtbags. Even more surprising, not all cops are assholes! Though its 'shocking' plot twist will be apparent to even the drunkest viewers, this crude but likeable outing proves that the hoary old biker genre lives on.

SHORT TAKES: Franka Potente caught the eye of US audiences in *RUN, LOLA, RUN*, but if she continues to star in crap like *ANATOMY (2000)*, she'll soon wear out her welcome. Director Stefan Ruzowitzky attempts to make a German-language horror romp just like they do in the US — and the result is just as empty and predictable. Potente stars as Paula, a brilliant (and annoyingly serious) med-student who's spending her summer at a lofty Heidelberg institute. Little does anyone suspect, some colleagues have been performing torturous vivisections on unsuspecting victims. When Paula notices irregularities in their classroom's freshest cadavers, our Teutonic Nancy Drew gets suspicious. Ultimately, Paula discovers a 16th century fraternity devoted to ignoring the Hippocratic Oath, in order to advance science — plus a couple surgical-psychos who've taken that disregard for life too far. Before the script can delve into this potentially cool concept, it degenerates into the usual assortment of chases and dull twists. Admittedly, there are some extremely graphic corpses on display, but they're only background trappings for a puddle-deep tale and a heroine that could've been played by any teen bimbo... An accomplished feature debut from writer-director Jeff Winner, **YOU ARE HERE* (2000)** is a slight but perceptive mix of character-driven humor, everyday frustrations and life's hard choices. Set in NYC's East Village, Todd Peters stars as Moe, an artist who's determined to quit his crappy day job, but is taken aback when suddenly offered a promotion instead. Reluctantly accepting this position and on the verge of turning thirty, Moe confronts his wasted years, accompanied by equally-unfocused friends that include co-worker Ajay Naidu, waitress Caroline Hall and self-destructive roommate Randall Jaynes. When an acquaintance commits suicide, this quartet deals with it in the only logical way — by getting drunk and pissed-off — leading to Moe's declaration of independence. Filmmaker Larry Fessenden (*HABIT*) turns up as Moe's boss Palichuck, and perfectly embodies the type of scruffy, middle-management pawn who needs to keep a handy liquor bottle in his desk. Though the story occasionally veers into naive or overwrought territories, the characters are realistic, their plight is universal, and it's always fueled by quietly insightful moments that expertly capture the aimlessness and camaraderie of its characters... Directed by Akihiko Shiota, **SASAYAKI [Moonlight Whispers] (1999)** is a masochistic love story that's painfully believable and (like most first crushes) steeped in misguided obsession. On the surface, Takuya (Kenji Mizuhashi) and pretty Satsuki (Tsugumi)

are normal teen classmates. But Takuya also has a fixation on this comely schoolgirl, and when he finds the courage to declare his desires, she instantly reciprocates. In typical teen-flick fashion, romance blooms, they experience their 'first time,' yet smitten Satsuki doesn't realize the depths of her new beau's fetishistic attraction. When the girl finally gets a peek into his "pervert" side, she also realizes that he's unwaveringly devoted to her. Soon she's manipulating this love-struck pet to her every whim — she forces Takuya to watch her screwing a hunky school chum (getting more excited by his voyeurism than by the dick inside of her) and orders this slave to lick the sweat off of both herself and her new lover. She might as well have the word 'bitch' tattooed across her forehead. Still, it's never as simple as you'd think, and while Shiota piles on the twisted episodes and schoolgirl imagery, the story's power struggle hauls its combatants into territories that are cruel, somber and surprisingly tender... **A GUN FOR JENNIFER (1996)** played fests a few years back, but still hasn't had a legit home video release. A delirious throwback to the glory days of grindhouse exploitation, director Todd Morris' gritty revenge flick is packed with bloodshed, nudity, anti-social behavior, and a corrosive feminist agenda. Deborah Twiss (who also co-scripted and produced) stars as abused wife Jennifer, who arrives at NYC's Port Authority and is instantly attacked by thugs. She's saved and embraced by a vanload of castrating female vigilantes — all suffering from their own fucked-up pasts. Working out of a go-go club run by a rape counselor, these no-nonsense gals slaughter a den of crack dealers, sodomize abusive soap opera actors with pool cues, plan revenge on a Supreme Court judge rapist, and turn a snuff-porn peddler's HQ into a slaughterhouse. Hey, there's nothing wrong so far, but when a cop is accidentally killed by them, his female partner (Benja Kay) takes it personally. Packed with rousing violence and effectively raw performances, this follows in the grand tradition of *MS. 45*, as a character-driven tale of broken outcasts and Twiss makes a vulnerable and compelling centerpiece. Its epilogue hints at future man-hating carnage, and I hope these filmmakers can someday fulfill that promise... The latest from director Takashi Ishii (*GONIN*) is the

claustrophobic psychodrama **FREEZE ME (2000)**. Inoue Harumi stars as Chihiro, a seemingly-ordinary young woman living in Tokyo, but inside, she's traumatized from five years earlier, when she was gang-raped in her hometown. Everything goes to hell when one of her old attackers suddenly shows up at her door, bursts in, strips down, and is armed with old blackmail photos. He also informs her that his other friends will be joining the party soon. For the first half, Chihiro lacks the barest instinct for self-survival, because instead of calling the cops and ending this home invasion, she's too much of an emotional weakling to do anything. All of that changes when she accidentally murders this intruder and tosses him into her fridge — noting what a "beautiful corpse" this asshole becomes when frozen stiff. The next thing you know, she's purchasing an industrial-sized freezer and preparing for her upcoming visitors. Although extremely stylish, at its core this is just an old-fashioned revenge flick without many surprises. Chihiro's insanity never rings true, while Ishii dresses up his generic exploitation with faux-chic trappings. The result is grueling, but never insightful, original or very entertaining... **MAU MAU SEX SEX (2000)** is a loose 'n' loving, 79-minute portrait of America's oldest exploitation pioneers, Dan Sonney and David F. Friedman. Director Ted Bonnitt's agenda is simple — hang out with these aging smut peddlers, as they recall their youthful cinematic successes, and later stitch it into the shape of a documentary. Sprinkled with clips from their sleaze gems, it covers a lot of familiar territory for fans already acquainted with their careers. The pair laugh about how they suckered in the public with

taboo subject matter and passed it off as 'educational' fare, while Friedman recalls the birth of the 'nude cutie' and the heyday of the pre-XXX adult theatre. Bonnitt pads out the movie with glimpses into their everyday life, and while it's initially amusing to see the two puttering about their homes, did we really need to watch Sonney doing his dishes or discussing his bad hip? The pair also visit Mike Vraney's Something Weird storage garage and pass by their old offices (which now house a Presbyterian Church), with some welcome historical perspective from longtime fan (and director) Frank Hennenlotter. It's an enjoyable lark, but far from the definitive word on these grindhouse groundbreakers.





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<input type="checkbox"/> Beyond The Darkness ('79) Twisted Joe D'Amato dir
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<input type="checkbox"/> Castle of Unholy Desires ('67/Spain) Adrian Hoven dir.
<input type="checkbox"/> Count Dracula ('78/BBC TV) Louis Jordan, 2 1/2 hrs
<input type="checkbox"/> Cry of a Prostitute ('72/Italian) Barbara Bouchet
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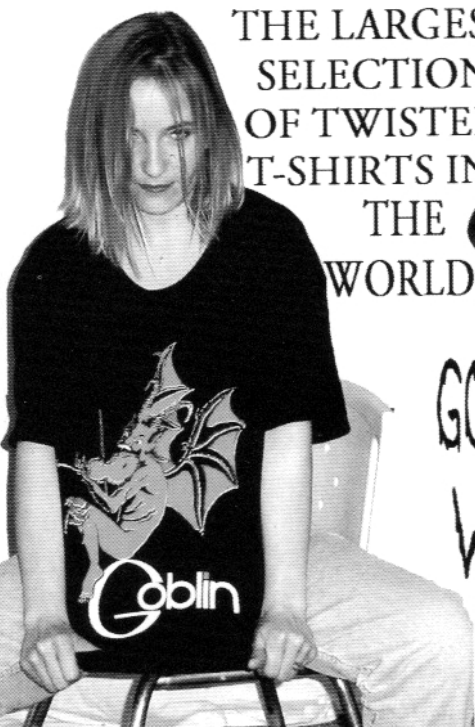


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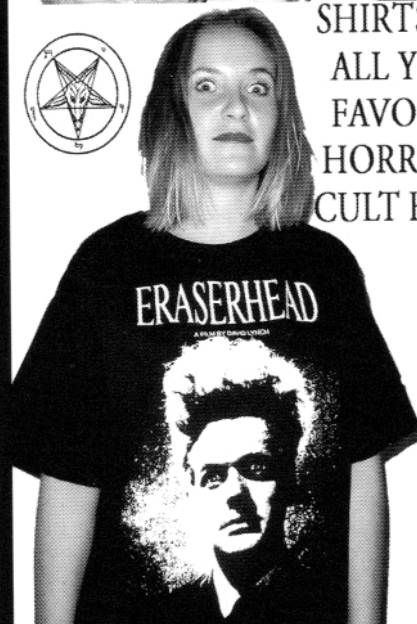


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ODDITIES

BUCKY MCSNEAD (2001). [Shut Up and Do It Productions, Mike Trippiedi, 802 Frank Drive, Champaign, IL 61821] Proudly proclaiming itself "the first slasher film done completely in rhyme," this short gem is like Dr. Seuss meets Ed Gein. Writer-director Mike Trippiedi has come up with an inspired idea, and skillfully splashes it onto the screen with both excessive grue and sly wit. Meanwhile Gary Ambler's rhyming narration is the perfect accompaniment to the on-screen silliness and slaughter. First glimpsed as your average, handsaw-wielding serial killer, we learn that Bucky McSnead's rage was rooted in his abusive and hateful parents ("Right then something snapped, inside his small brain, / And nothing could stop him from going insane."). With more and more dead bodies piling up, the police are baffled and approach a female profiler (who has her own share of bizarre personal traumas, due to her lesbian daughter), even as a blind girl falls for Bucky's inner charms, with all of these plot threads converging in a cemetery. Steve Davis makes a jolly psychopath, and his sing-song story is a beautifully conceived blast of fun. Sure, it's a one-joke effort, but it's also a damned funny joke, and at only 20 minutes doesn't overstay its welcome. Plus, it even promises a sequel — in Pig Latin!

GOD MADE MAN (2000). [Diatribes Films, P.O. Box 48469, Los Angeles, CA 90048] Written, produced and directed by "Crazy Pete" (a/k/a Peter N. Nelson), this is a hilariously deranged flick that doesn't make a lick of sense, but is funny as hell. Shot on 35mm, it's an indie sketch-comedy throwback to the glory days of KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE, overflowing with chaos and absurdity. Bouncing between various characters, we first visit Consolidated Industries, the purveyor of such necessary household devices as the "Stigmatizer" (a Popee-like device that creates your own grisly stigmata), as well as its CEO, who has a close, personal and dysfunctional relationship with a red pajama'ed Satan. There's also Marty Lindsey as a donut delivery boy with a dangerously obsessive crush on a slutty secretary. When she blows him off, he carves her (misspelled) name on his hand, deep fries it, chops it off, and goes ballistic. Add to that a TV-pitchman existing in a hellish suburbia, where his zombified kids sit in front of the radio and beehive-haired mom serves tongue for breakfast. Characters intersect and disappear, expectations are upended, plus you've got pissing in the company coffee pot (since the boss enjoys its nutty flavor), giving CPR to a rat (and getting off on it), and a hitman (Jou Jou Papailleur) known as "The Baby" — with this Brother sporting a '70s pimpadelic hat, gold chains and a huge diaper. This is a blissfully offensive blast of music, bad taste, crude jokes, colorful production design, and a wonderfully obtrusive laughtrack. It rarely lets up, and though not all of the gags deliver, when they do, watch out for spit takes. Obviously, there's something seriously wrong with our 'auteur' Crazy Pete, but luckily, the guy's getting it out of his system by making brain-damaged films like this one.

LETHAL FORCE (2001). [Divergent Thinking Productions, P.O. Box 60261, Potomac, MD 20859; www.lethalforcethemovie.com] The feature debut by writer-director Alvin Ecarma is an impressively brutal and adrenalized treat that's both a tribute and satire of old-fashioned, kick-ass action films. Within minutes you'll realize that Ecarma has seen far too many B-movies, and now gets to revel in their brand of over-ripe dialogue, hard-hitting fights and inherent absurdity. Frank Prather plays gangster Jack Carter, whose son is kidnapped by a wheelchair villain named Mal Locke (Andrew Hewitt), with a fortress guarded by masked minions. In order to get his boy back, Carter has to set up his old pal Savitch (Cash Flagg, Jr.), a steely super-assassin. Locke is looking for revenge, and Savitch finds himself besieged by a bizarre array of foes, including the butch Big Bertha, savage strippers and Minnesotan hitmen, and spends most of the film leaping, kicking, bleeding, and slaughtering anyone in his way. When our killing machine hero is eventually tortured within an inch of his life, it only leads to a seriously damaged finale! Although its story won't tax any brain cells, Ecarma's imaginative filmmaking is packed with adrenaline, twisted humor and severe violence — such as a huge fuckin' power drill taken to a human skull. For an indie production, it's also crammed with surprisingly intricate fight-choreography, while cinematographer/action-director Eric Thornett turns up on-screen to battle Savitch, and allows himself be set on fire! At its center, Flagg is a deliriously sadistic bad-ass who makes Jean Claude Van Damme look like a pussy (OK, I admit that's not difficult) and has the resilience of Wile E. Coyote. It adds up to a winning mix of savvy laughs and non-stop excitement on a home-grown budget.

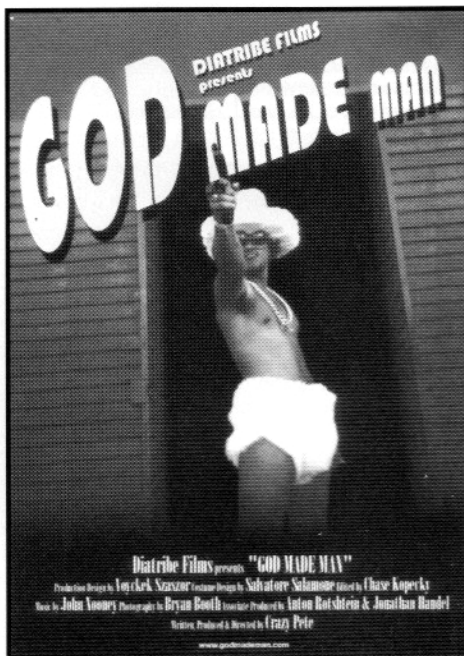
MIGRATING FORMS (Provisional; 1999). The sophomore feature from director James Fotopoulos (ZERO) again proves his unwaveringly experimental vision. Shot on 16mm b&w, this eerie and abrasive descent is definitely *not* aimed at average moviegoers, since it mixes long takes, avant-garde imagery and eroticism-free nudity, while slowly distributing its secrets in its own sweet time. Frustratingly vague, you mustn't search for a standard 'plot', because you'll come up empty. We first encounter "The Man" (Preston Baty) through his everyday routines — doing his laundry, sitting around his bare apartment and repeatedly inviting "The Woman" (Rebecca Lewis) over for a quick fuck. As these encounters continue, their sexual escapades evolve, while that tumorous, Cronenbergian lump on her spine is never mentioned. The Woman's sexual desires soon take new directions, from sodomy to a bite that leaves our Man with a huge infected wound; and when his injury transforms into a gnarled lump of diseased scar tissue, he's so screwed up that when he gets a hot new chick back to his dump, he asks her to leave. It's primarily a two-character piece that's less enlightening than depressing, and like a later day ERASERHEAD, deposits us into a stark, unpleasurable realm. Unfortunately, unlike Lynch's trippy dreamwork, it lacks absurd humor and a darker emotional resonance. On the positive side, Tom Nicholl's score is a sonic Brillo pad that'll leave you raw. It's too bad the film is as loose as a bag of Shake 'n' Bake. Filled with loneliness, obsessive behavior, dead insects, ugly sex, and non-stop pretentiousness, the film tries to burrow under your skin, but only leaves an empty (but intriguing) aftertaste. Only 80 minutes long, it'll probably feel twice that for most viewers.

FACE OF GORE 3 (2000). [Astaroth Entertainment, P.O. Box 7633, Olympia, WA 98507-7633; \$20 + \$4 shipping] Todd Tjersland once again cobbles together a batch of stomach-churning, real-life carnage for your sick enjoyment. As usual, most of it's Asian crime and accident photography — from Thailand, Japan, China,

The Philippines, plus a little from Brazil and Africa — as police and medics scrape up the torn 'n' twisted pieces. Hosted by our babbling 'expert', Dr. Vincent van Gore, with Tjersland's narration merrily joking about this on-screen meat-market, we get car crashes, train dismemberments, high-rise suicides, police shooting victims, and a maggot-infested body fished out of a swamp. There's even unflinching footage of dead babies; stabbed, burnt and cannibalized Malaysian women; and an on-screen abortion. Perhaps I've just become desensitized by this fucked-up franchise, but while these demises were grim, they also lacked imagination, as if Todd was digging through leftover footage. The sophomoric narration also works too hard to be shocking, with nasty AIDS diatribes, glib insults, concocted scenarios, and joke captions. Sure, it makes the footage less depressing, but it's also tiresome after a couple minutes, like being stuck in a room with a loud, clueless frat boy. Also available: BEST OF FACES OF GORE, which compiles the series' creme de la carnage, plus 30 minutes of new morgue footage, with painful "homeboy" voice-over. Although I've never been a fan of true-grue fare, there's a knuckle-dragging market for this dreck, and Tjersland's outrageous outings blow away all other death-footage competitors.

DEVIL GIRLS (2000). [<http://bmm.hispeed.com>] Adapted from one of Ed Wood Jr.'s trashy '60s novels, this is a crude but contagious 70-minute homage from writer-director Andre Perkowski, who's working on a

budget that even poor ol' Eddie wouldn't have tolerated. It's an overwrought, b&w juvenile delinquent melodrama starring tough talking dames (who're all high on horse and looking for "kicks") plus sinister thugs, a dim-witted lawman, pulpy clichés, and kitschy old film clips. There are plenty of sleazy, over-ripe plot threads, including dope smuggling, a little cross dressing, and hard-drinking Sheriff Buck Rhodes investigating the influx of anti-social behavior in the local high school. Meanwhile, sociopathic Lila (Sandra Delgado) escapes from prison, plans to take over a gang of chicks led by hooked Dee (Jody Ann Martin), while leading her little sis Rhoda (Katie Dugan) down the rocky road of crime. Hey, there's even a perpetually shirtless Tor Johnson clone, playing a diner's Swedish chef, Lobo! Plus a Criswell imitator who repeatedly interrupts the story! The actors give their all, even if they don't seem to have a bit of talent or charisma (but enough about Sheriff Buck), and the film is at its best when focusing on the gals' hopped-up antics. It's only when the filmmakers attempt a more ambitious scene — like a car crash — that it becomes embarrassing. Fueled by a jazzy, impromptu atmosphere, I'm sure Ed Wood himself would be proud that his penny-ante legacy lives on.

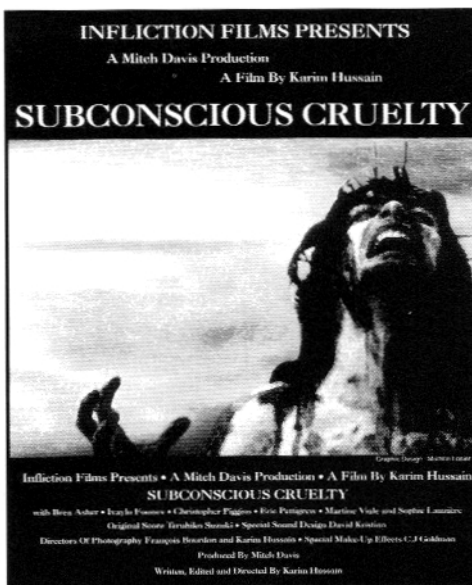


SUBCONSCIOUS CRUELTY (2000). [Infliction Films; www.inflictionfilms.com] It's difficult to prepare oneself for this type of surreal cinematic onslaught. Mixing caustic ideas and gorgeously grim visuals (and never skimping on the nudity, violence or bloodshed), this works overtime to plumb the sickest regions of the human condition. Unfortunately, there's little narrative glue to keep it from falling to pieces. Writer-director Karim Hussain spent six years making the film, and I only wish that its humorless self-importance didn't get on my nerves so quickly. After an opening sequence that describes the inherent difference between the Right and Left hemispheres of the brain, and warns us that there'll be little logic ahead, we enter its anthology of dark emotions and desires. First, we have a sicko (Ivaylo Founev) obsessed with his pregnant sister (Brea Asher), all the way to her giving birth and the ghastly results (while his grating voice-over sounds like a story that'd be posted on some fetish newsgroup). Other episodes have nude bodies writhing on the grass and screwing the earth; an everyday businessman (Christopher Piggins) jacks off to graphic porn videos; a sleeping man is violated by dreamlike torturers; and let's not forget a last-minute appearance by that wacky Son-o'-God, Jesus (along with a bit of cannibalism and sodomy, of course), so no heavy-handed theme is forgotten. Produced by Mitch Davis, the film's primary strength lies in its visual power. Aided by gorgeous cinematography and a wealth of disturbing imagery, it's almost enough to make us forget about its numbing barrage of film school pretensions. Is it shocking? Sure. Offensive? Absolutely. But it's also strangely empty and lacks any type of humor (unless this was all supposed to be a parody of artsy angst-strewn flicks, after all). Hey, there's nothing wrong with a solid dose of dementia, despair and obsession — they're three of my favorite topics — but this one left me thoroughly underwhelmed.

GOOD GRIEF (2000). [Andrew Dickson, P.O. Box 12324, Portland, OR 97212; www.goodgriefmovie.com] For this "role-playing adventure," writer-director Andrew Dickson has chosen a difficult subject — a Dungeons & Dragons-style nerd. Shot on 16mm, the story might have its share of dark and dysfunctional undercurrents, but they're never realized, since the naive script is almost as misguided as its lead dweeb. At first glance, Chuck (David Gray) is a typical teen geek. He's abused by bullies, spends his time playing "Monsters & Mayhem," and when his parents tell

him that they can't afford an expensive college, he whines and pouts instead of simply taking out a fuckin' student loan. Of course, Chuck also has a crush on one of the gals in his gaming group, despite her college-age boyfriend. So what does this dork do? He becomes obsessed with a role-playing legend of a buried \$100G statue, which takes him and his group on a road trip. Along the way, they squabble, get pissed-off, and make pit stops to play "M&M," while the movie occasionally visualizes their game-action, with the leads in cheap medieval warrior and wizard gear. Yes, it's embarrassing! Meanwhile, Beth Mack gives a likeable performance as Darcy, a green-haired misfit, and the coolest role goes to Richard Meltzer as a drunken game designer who gives Chuck a long-overdue dose of reality. It's about time, since Chuck's combination of stupidity, egotism, and disdain for anyone who intrudes on his pathetic fantasy world makes you wish someone would kick him in the teeth with a steel-toed boot. I guess the film could also be considered sci-fi, since the girls are cute and the guys are (relatively) acne-free. In other words, they're like no D&D players I've ever met! Honestly, most of these characters are so inane that I can't understand why the filmmakers thought anyone could stomach 77-minutes of their drivel.

REST IN PEACE (Provisional; 1998). Following her impressive East Village feature WHAT ABOUT ME?, director Rachel Amodeo returns with an altogether-different effort. Shot in b&w and only 14 minutes long, Amodeo works hard to evoke the flavor of an old-fashioned silent film, while its actresses (Amodeo and Dame Darcy) layer on the heavy make-up in order to give it a somewhat Gothic veneer. The pair star as sisters Mabel & Batavia Dibble, with Mabel (Amodeo) recently deceased and Batavia (Darcy) mourning her loss. Leaving her sis' graveyards, Batavia is followed by her transparent spirit-sibling, and as she attempts to sleep, she's haunted by visions of Mabel — who wants her favorite scissors(?) returned to her. While this succeeds as an homage to silent filmmaking, right down to the suitably overwrought performances, it lacks any real story for its foundation. Without one, the film is all atmosphere and little else. Sure, it's beautifully crafted, but the drama is as diaphanous as poor dead Mabel. The film's limited success is mostly due to its superb technical aspects, including M. Henry James and Mark Brady's exceptional cinematography, which is steeped in graveyards, grief and ghostly double-exposures. The result is certainly stylish, but a little too slight for my tastes.



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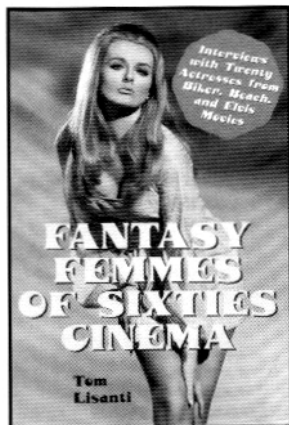
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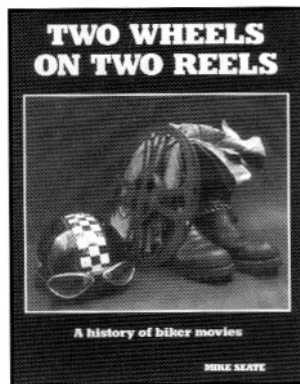
Shocking Books

FANTASY FEMMES OF SIXTIES CINEMA by Tom Lisanti (McFarland & Co, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$40.50 postpaid). If you love '60s exploitation flicks,

this 310-page hardcover is an essential acquisition, since author Tom Lisanti focuses on one of the main reasons for their success, both then and now. Namely, the starlets who steamed up drive-in screens. These ladies were hot, and it's about time they were tracked down and interviewed! Spotting 20 of the sexiest (and, oh yeah, talented) actresses to grace the B-movie genre — from biker & beach movies, to groovy counterculture craziness — each gets her own chapter, laced with amusing anecdotes (from working with the likes of Elvis, John Wayne and Jerry Lewis, to guest-babe gigs on shows like *THE MONKEES* and *BATMAN*). Its roster of babes include *COOL HAND LUKE*'s car-wash tease Joy Harmon, *LAND OF THE GIANTS* hottie Deanna Lund, and even *PLANET OF THE APES*' Nova, Linda Harrison. But Lisanti also includes lots of my personal faves, including Tisha Sterling (*THE NAME OF THE GAME IS KILL*), Lana Wood (*FREE GRASS*), Diane McBain (*THE MINI-SKIRT MOB*), Judy Pace (*THE SLAMS*), plus *THE TRIP*'s Acid freak-out girl Salli Sachse. They openly discuss the highs and lows of their careers, how the business changed over the years, and what they've been doing recently — while its selection of photos aptly demonstrate their sex appeal. Though Lisanti occasionally sounds a bit fawning, his writing is well-researched and insightful, as he balances the book's fanboy agenda with a true appreciation of these timeless screen icons and their niche in screen history.



TWO WHEELS ON TWO REELS by Mike Seate (Whitehorse Press, 107 East Conway Road, P.O. Box 60, North Conway, NH 03860; \$15.95 + \$4 shipping; www.whitehorsepress.com). I've been a longtime fanatic of biker movies (dig up my 1988 article from the British *SHOCK XPRESS*, "Attack of the Cycle Psychos," for additional proof), so I was overjoyed that someone finally had the good sense to devote an entire book to this lovably anti-social (and woefully unappreciated) genre. Though a bit slim at only 112-pages, author (and motorcyclist) Mike Seate knows his territory inside out, covers a wide berth, and writes with an ingratiating style. Beginning with Brando's groundbreaking *THE WILD ONE*, Seate details the early history of these "chopper-operas", as well as the public's fears and fascination of the biker lifestyle due to these movies. The negative perceptions only increased (as did drive-in box-offices) when the late-'60s delivered a slew of biker epics, with Seate charting all of the highs (*THE WILD ANGELS*) and forgettable lows. In a pleasant surprise, Seate also focuses on more than just the usual B-movie outlaw bikers and their violent, beer-guzzling agenda. Later chapters profile British bikeramas (from *THE LEATHER BOYS* to *QUADROPHENIA*), cycle racer movies (such as *LITTLE FAUSS* and *BIG HALSY*), and well as the genre's most intriguing aberrations, like *KNIGHTRIDERS*, *THE LOVELESS* and *ROADSIDE PROPHETS*. More than just about the movies, *TWO WHEELS* takes time to examine how these films occasionally mirrored, and more often twisted, the realities of the biker lifestyle — in the process, creating an image of freedom and rebellion that still lives on today.



SEE NO EVIL: BANNED FILMS AND VIDEO CONTROVERSY by David Kerekes and David Slater (Headpress/Critical Vision; www.headpress.com; \$25.95). As UK horror fans know all too well, videos of exploitation classics such as *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE* and *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT* were long banned by Britain's Director of Public Prosecutions. Well, this exhaustive, 416-page softcover details the history of these infamous "video nasties." Beginning with a rundown of the early growth of home video in the UK, it was no surprise that sex and violence were the most popular elements of this hot new home entertainment venue. But soon so-called "obscene" videos were being seized by police, who dimwittedly grabbed up

everything from innocuous horror films with gruesome-sounding titles, to *THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS*! This eventually led to the Video Recordings Act of 1984, which regulated (re: censored) explicitly violent "video nasties," and authors Kerekes and Slater analyze approximately 75 of these films — from Massaccesi's *ABSDUR* to Fulci's *ZOMBIE* — with a detailed synopsis and criticism of each "depraved" work. Ironically, the banning of these movies made them even more desirable to hardcore horror fans, and one of my favorite chapters details the growth of the video black market, horror fanzines, bootleg dealers and police raids, with absurd (and often scary) anecdotes from various collectors. Another later chapter focuses on news media's preoccupation with blaming violent videos for vicious real-life crimes, along with insightful analysis of these cases. Meticulously researched and loaded with fascinating material, particularly for US readers who were fortunate enough to have (so far) avoided all of this puritanical government bullshit.



VAMPIRE OVER LONDON - BELA LUGOSI IN BRITAIN by Frank J. Dello Stritto & Andi Brooks (Cult Movies Press, 644 East 7-1/2 Street, Houston, TX, 77007; \$29.95 plus \$3.00 shipping, Texas residents add \$2.48 sales tax). Numerous books have been written about Bela Lugosi over the years, but this tremendous new volume manages to offer a wealth of new information! A must for Lugosi fanatics, it

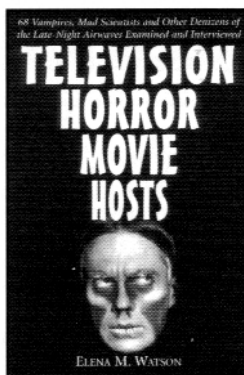
meticulously traces this legendary star's last hurrah in the role that made him a horror icon, during his 1951 British stage tour in *DRACULA*. No question, the authors have done their research on this subject, and the result is the final word on this portion of Lugosi's life — which is often overlooked or misrepresented as a dismal failure in previous Bela bios. In reality, this tour took him throughout Britain — including Brighton, Glasgow, Belfast, Portsmouth, and more — for 24 weeks and over 200 performances, until Lugosi's ill-health put an end to it. This beautiful hardcover, 368-page hardcover takes us through every possible aspect of the tour, from rehearsals, problems, specific performances, meeting fans, and reviews from local critics, accompanied by rare photographs, handbills and newspaper ads. Filled with wonderfully insightful anecdotes from every stop along the way, authors Dello Stritto and Brooks locate people who worked on the production and even audience members who, a half-century later, vividly recall the experience. Focusing on more than just this specific tour, they also offer a detailed overview of Lugosi's career — from stage and screen, to typecasting and his passing — as well as his previous visits to England in the '30s. It's a humorous, informative and often touching tribute to a little known slice of Bela's life.

THE ILSA CHRONICLES by Darrin Venticini and Tristan Thompson (Midnight Media; www.midnight-media.demon.co.uk; \$15). I'm probably one of the few cult movie fans who was actually bored by the old *ILSA* movies, but even I was floored by this 60-page tribute to these '70s exploitation classics and its pneumatic star, Dyanne Throne. Thankfully, even the authors admit that the first *ILSA* was a "brutal and shameless exercise in depravity and relentless sadism," so at least they aren't trying to convince us that these nasty flicks are actually misunderstood masterworks. Along the way, each movie receives a detailed plot synopsis and intelligent critical analysis. But the best is saved for last, during a massive interview with Dyanne Thorne and *ILSA* co-star



(and current husband) Howard Muarar, who offer hefty insights into the making of this series, as well as Dyanne's entire cinematic career. Editor/designer Paul J. Brown has once again created a gorgeous and collectable publication, filled with lurid photos and rare ad mats. It's also the ultimate guide to this deliciously trashy grindhouse franchise, which is still making new fans on home video and DVD, where they can now be enjoyed by the entire family.

TELEVISION HORROR MOVIE HOSTS by Elena M. Watson (McFarland & Co, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 1-800-253-2187; \$29 postpaid). Most of us are familiar with them. In New York City it was Zacherley, the Cool Ghoul. In New Orleans they had Morgus the Magnificent, and in Cleveland, Ghoulardi. They were the horror hosts, who introduced B-movies during Saturday afternoons and weekend nights, and were often a highlight of our TV-viewing childhood. First published in 1991, this newly-reissued softcover



devotes over 250 pages to that beloved (and now virtually extinct) TV-staple. Profiling nearly 70 of these hosts, it begins with the 1954 premiere of sexy Vampira (Malla Nurmi) and the '57 syndication of 100's of Universal horror classics — which initiated an onslaught of local mad scientists and wacky weirdos. Separate chapters are then devoted to the most famous stars and their unique routines, including Zacherley (John Zacherle), who made comic appearances with in his movies and went onto hit records; Morgus (Sid Noel), who had a feature film based around his kooky character, plus Pittsburgh's Chilly Billy, Nashville's Sir Cecil Creape, and over a dozen more. There's even a page devoted to my hometown "Monster Movie Matinee" hosts, Syracuse's Dr. E. Nick Witty and Epal! I only wish that Watson had made an effort to contact some of these aging ex-hosts for more extensive comments on their careers. Though never digging too deep, this still covers a wide territory and is a nostalgic treat for any horror fan who grew up glued to the TV in the '60s.

JESSE VINT *Continued from PAGE 7*

I said, "Jesus, if Max could only be like this all the time!" I guess he's older now and he's calmed down. Twenty-five years ago, he was out of control. Screaming, yelling, threatening, and trying to intimidate — that was the way people saw him, and that's basically why he didn't have a career as a director. It's not that ODE TO BILLY JOE was such a bad film — it's that people were nervous about being around him. In my mind, if he had kept his head and been cool and had any social grace at all, he would've had a career as a director.

SC: You wrote and directed a film yourself in 1989, ANOTHER CHANCE.

Vint: That's my story. It's about an incorrigible womanizer who was on a soap opera and had some strong acting credits, but had a severe case of peckeritis, which made it difficult for him to have a monogamous relationship with somebody — even if that somebody was perfect in every way. When I screened the completed film at the Directors Guild to a full house, the men were standing in line, laughing and shaking their heads, telling me that what they'd just watched was their life story to a tee. Peckeritis is a common affliction,

more common than people might think.

SC: So you believe in the adage, "Write what you know."

Vint: I write all I can from personal experience, and if I have to go outside of that, it's well researched. I have a script about William the Conqueror at Drew Barrymore's company. Believe it or not, the interaction between William and the other characters, as well as their code of honor, is taken from my own life and my training at the Oklahoma Military Academy. BORN TO FIGHT, the western script I have at TNT, is about the Reno Brothers of Indiana, and the sibling rivalry, the jealousy, the pranks, the fights, etc. are taken right out of the relationship I had with my two brothers while we were growing up.

SC: You're in two upcoming independent features, DREAMERS and MONKEY LOVE.

Vint: I haven't seen DREAMERS yet. I liked the people who made the film, but I felt that the script failed to intensify. But it's doing very well in festivals, so I'm very happy for them. I just finished MONKEY LOVE, which was shot digitally. The script is pretty good, and the three actors in the leads are a gifted trio that I think

will make the film successful. The filmmakers were racing to get it ready for Sundance, but they didn't make the deadline.

SC: Do you prefer working on independent films or big studio pictures?

Vint: Well, you make so much more money on the studio films, but you have a greater sense of freedom on the independent films. You can be more of a wise guy — you can be looser, quirkier. But in studio films, unless you're Bruce Willis, you're expected to step up and do the line and get the hell out of there so the lead actor can goof off he wants to. So there's more of a chance for me to be creative in the independent films. The studio films are great money, though, and I'll never argue with that!

SC: We're out of time, and I haven't asked you about LITTLE BIG MAN, I COME IN PEACE, CENTENNIAL...

Vint: I knocked Timothy Dalton out cold on CENTENNIAL. In front of the Holiday Inn, in front of everybody — actors, stuntmen, everybody. Out cold. But I'll tell you about that in the next interview. ☺
[When surfing the Web, visit www.jessevint.com]

VIC ARGO *Continued from PAGE 24*

SC: You've been working a lot with Amos Kollek lately.

Argo: Two features. And a short for German television. FAST FOOD, FAST WOMEN was the first. It's one of these movies that will probably get wonderful reviews and close three days later. It played at Cannes and I went to see it up at Toronto. Terrific film. Wonderful acting, great sense of humor. When I auditioned, I didn't think I was going to get it. The part was a cranky Jewish guy in the park, and I thought, nobody's going to cast me in a Jewish part, not in this country. But for an Israeli director to cast me as a Jewish guy was great.

SC: Just judging from the episode of EROTIC TALES, Kollek gets at something I've seen in you and I've always wanted to see onscreen. You play a guy who sits up late and reads. Not necessarily an intellectual, but somebody who's got something going on other than breaking fingers.

Argo: He's about my age. In LORETTA WENT SOUTH, I think I'm playing his alter ego. We never discussed the characters much, hardly at all, but I could tell by the way he acts.

SC: Who's in FAST FOOD, FAST WOMEN?

Argo: Louise Lasser's in it. Austin Pendleton. Anna Thompson. Lovely actress. She's so touching on film. In life, too.

SC: She did a bit in Olive Stone's TALK RADIO, she played a drunk woman at a basketball game and she's one of the scariest women I've ever seen in a film.

Argo: You just fall in love with her in FAST FOOD, FAST WOMEN. She's got this slight quality. You just

see her and you want to know her and fall in love with her. They love her in France. She's like a little waif. After that, I played a lead for him in LORETTA WENT SOUTH, and did a short for him, "Angela," part of a series called EROTIC TALES, for German television. Austin Pendleton plays my psychiatrist again, in that. In the EROTIC TALES short, I fall in love with this young girl, which is basically the same story as LORETTA WENT SOUTH. And FAST FOOD, FAST WOMEN. Really well done and funny. FAST FOOD did great in France, it played in something like seventy theaters, and in Israel it did great. We got wonderful reviews in France, and I imagine we'll get wonderful reviews here, too, because it's just a lovely film.

SC: "Loretta Went South" is your song. You sing it at the end of the EROTIC TALES episode.

Argo: And in the film, I sing it at the West Bank Cafe. And it looks great. I usually sing it higher, it's much faster, much better, but I couldn't sing that day. We recorded it again, but they ended up using the original track. In LORETTA WENT SOUTH, I play a guy who's dying of cancer, three months to live. Pendleton is my psychiatrist in that, like he was in EROTIC TALES.

SC: So "Angela" was a sketch for LORETTA WENT SOUTH?

Argo: I guess it gave him the idea. In that, I meet this gal...She's got a rich boyfriend, she's from a very wealthy family in Connecticut. And somehow we get together, in a bar, and we wind up with like an eight month-old baby in Mexico. On the beach.

SC: ANGEL EYES was with Jennifer Lopez.

Argo: All I do in that is cry. Sonia Braga plays my wife, Jennifer's mother. I got two scenes and I cry in both of

them. Two lines, two scenes and a lotta tears. Sonia was terrific, the life of the party. Jennifer's kind of shy and quiet. She's a good actress. I had never seen her work before, but in rehearsals she was terrific. You just look in her eyes, and you feel emotion.

SC: Were you psyched to work with Tom DiCillo on DOUBLE WHAMMY?

Argo: I had a great time on that. Dennis Leary is a cop in it, and I'm his boss. I threaten to take all of his cases away and give them to Chris Noth. We shot in New Jersey, mostly, a precinct house there. I'm looking forward to seeing that. When I went into the audition, I had no idea who DiCillo was because I don't remember names. But I walked into the audition and he says, "Hey, Vic, you look terrific." I said, "How the fuck do you even know what I look like?" I mean, I didn't say that, but And I went home and I found out this was the guy who directed two of my favorite movies. I think LIVING IN OBLIVION is brilliant. Brilliant. But one of my favorites that didn't do so well, which I've seen three times, I just love it, is JOHNNY SUEDE. I think JOHNNY SUEDE is brilliant. The texture of it, the starkness of it, the unusualness of it.

SC: And now you're about to head off to the Sundance Film Festival. So you're doing a lot now.

Argo: Finally. I never regretted spending all my money always going for the good time. But I'm regretting it now, for the first time in my life, and I want to work a little harder. Because of the travel and the opportunity to do a couple of good parts a year, not for anybody out there liking me. I'm embarrassed by walking in front of cameras, people taking pictures of me. But I like acting, and I like to see myself do good work. I really, really like it. ☺

MAGS, ZINES & SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

ASIAN CULT CINEMA #30 (P.O. Box 16-1919, Miami, FL 33116; \$6 each, or 6 issues for \$30). A slick, must-have digest devoted to Asian filmmaking. The latest issue features an exclusive interview with Anthony Wong, assorted articles on Korean cinema, and several reviews (including my own take on a trio of outrageous Takashi Miike films).

ASKEW REVIEWS #7 (Denis Sheehan, P.O. Box 684, Hanover, MA 02339; \$2 ppd). The latest edition of this 32-page zine is generously crammed with movie, anime and music reviews, plus an interview with some band named Kermit's Finger.

CARBON 14 #17-18 (P.O. Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125; \$20 for 4 issues). This alternative music mag is crammed with interviews and reviews, but my favorite portion has always been Dan Taylor's ultra-cool Exploitation Retrospect insert. Alas, these contain his final two (best-of compilation) outings.

CASHIERS DU CINEMART #12 (Mike White, P.O. Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192; \$12 for 5 issues). The latest, 96-page edition of Mike White's terrific mag includes a *Black Shampoo* reunion, Sid & Marty Krofft, Timothy Carey, loads of reviews, and much more! One of my favorite zines, and essential reading!

THE CHEESEPLANT #4-5 (Matt Blake, 27 Latymer Court, Hammersmith, London, W6 7JD, England; \$8 apiece, \$25 for 4). #4 includes two dozen lengthy reviews of obscure EuroCrime flicks, while #5 chronicles the career of Anthony Steffen. Lotsa fun and a terrific reference source for EuroTrash aficionados.

CINEMAD #4 (Mike Plante, P.O. Box 43909, Tucson, AZ 85733-3909; \$12 for 4 issues). Devoted to cutting-edge cinema, this entertaining mag tackles diverse territory, from indie auteurs like Jeff Krulik and Craig Baldwin, to acclaimed directors Charles Burnett and Sergei Paradjanov. Recommended!

CINEZINE #1-2 (12 Skylark Lane, Stonybrook, NY 11790; \$1 each). A 4-page newsletter devoted to film-

related topics, from brief reviews to random rants aimed at easy targets. Amusing, but lightweight.

CRIMSON CELLULOID #5 (David Nolte, P.O. Box 352, Plympton, SA 5038 Australia). The latest dose of this lovable, 12-page Aussie zine features a Q&A with death row convict Douglas Clark, amusing reviews (from porn flicks to local weirdos) and a hilarious editorial. Great stuff!

DVD ZONE #1 (Media Publications, 2 Leswin Place, London, N16 7NJ, England). The premiere issue of this slick, 32-page mag is an extremely informative guide to the sleaziest new DVD releases. Amidst plentiful graphics, it critiques discs' technical quality, catalogs their extras and compares various versions. Get it at: www.mediapublications.co.uk.

FILM GEEK #4 (P.O. Box 501113, Tulsa, OK 74150; \$1 ppd). Every issue of this 16-page Xerox-digest reviews a handful of cult faves (from *Twisted Brain* to *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*) and is armed with a welcome enthusiasm for its sleazy subject matter.

JOHN STEINER #2 (John McGuckin, Flat 18, 21 Dougrie Rd, Castlemilk, Glasgow, G45 9AX, Scotland). A 20-page digest devoted to character actor John Steiner. This sophomore issue includes a couple reviews, grainy pix, and miscellaneous Steiner sightings on film and TV. Crude but lovably obsessive.

MICRO-FILM #3 (Jason Pankoke, Opteryx Press, P.O. Box 45, Campaign, IL 61824; \$10 for 3 issues, \$3.50 each). A slick and always-insightful mag devoted to indie filmmaking, this issue features articles on Eric Brummer's *Debbie Does Damnation*, Troma-epic *Terror Firmer* and Vincent Pereira's *A Better Place*, plus lots of reviews. Recommended!

NATIONAL SLEAZOGRAPHIC (Dave Walter, 308 E. 7th Street, Bloomington, IN 47408; \$1). This entertaining digest reviews a couple dozen video oddities (like *The Baby and Groupies*), rating each on entertainment value, technical quality and sleaze factor.

ROASTING RODERICK #6 (Parker Anderson, P.O. Box 1285, Prescott, AZ 86302). Well-researched and badly-Xeroxed, this old-school, stapled in the top-left-corner zine features a lengthy letters column, video reviews and loads of obscure John Carradine trivia.

SEVERE CINEMA #34 (Brian Johnson, 11 Werner Road, Greenville, PA 16125-9434; \$3). Formerly entitled *They Won't Stay Dead*, this cool 12-page zine reviews grindhouse-era films, books, zines, and is always packed with attitude, humor and information.

SINERAMA #1 (Media Publications, 2 Leswin Place, London, N16 7NJ, England). If you're a cinematic sleaze fanatic, this slick, 32-page mag is for you! Packed with no-nonsense reviews of nasty releases from around the world, and generously illustrated. Check it out at: www.mediapublications.co.uk.

STREETCLEANER / MOVIE HELL #10 (Dymon Enlow, PMB 146, 1515 N. Town East Blvd. Suite 138, Mesquite, TX 75150; 2 stamps). An 8-page review-newsletter that spans every possible genre, from Rock Hudson's *World War III* (which rates a B-) to Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* (D+).

TRASH TIMES #9 (Rich Behrens, P.O. Box 248, Glenview, IL 60025; \$2 ppd). The newest edition of this fun 32-page film-'n'-music digest features a profile of Herschell Gordon Lewis, eclectic articles, plus dozens of movie, music and print reviews.

UNCUT #10 (Midnight Media, P.O. Box 211, Huntingdon, PE29 2WD, England). A gorgeously-produced UK mag that reviews loads of sleazy videos. Exceptionally well-written, the latest includes a lengthy interview with *I Spit on Your Grave*'s Camille Keaton! Get it at: www.midnight-media.demon.co.uk.

ZINE GUIDE #4 (P.O. Box 5467, Evanston, IL 60204; 4-issues for \$18). Crammed with hundreds of reviews, this is an amazingly informative 152-page magazine devoted to the wild world of zines. An indispensable acquisition that's highly recommended!

VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS

ALPHA BLUE ARCHIVES, P.O. Box 16072, Dept. Shock, Oakland, CA 94610. Offering tons of vintage sleaze, from software fare to XXX-gems from the industry's raunchiest stars. Get their hot new catalog and visit 'em at: www.alphabluearchives.com.

BLACKEST HEART MEDIA, P.O. Box 3376, Antioch, CA 94531-3376. Packed with twisted videos, t-shirts, comics, & CD's, their catalog is \$3. Go straight to: www.blackestheart.com. Recommended!!

BLOODGORE, P.O. Box 543, Iselin, NJ 08830. \$2 (cash only) gets you their catalog, filled with horror, gore, Mondo movies, and X-rated sleaze.

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA, P.O. Box 12161, Spring, TX 77391-2161. Overflowing with sexy and artsy gems, their \$3 catalog is crammed with excellent quality overseas oddities. Recommended! ETC is also on-line at: www.diabolik.demon.co.uk.

EYE TV / INTRAVENOUS VIDEO, c/o Tony Pradlik, 14 Fieldstone Dr. #348, Hartsdale, NY 10530. A wildly eclectic collection of video oddities, from sleaze to high-art to music rarities. Check 'em out on-line at: <http://members.aol.com/rcknrex/collect/index.htm>

GRAVEDIGGER VIDEO, c/o Robert Plante, 1372 Crane St., Schenectady, NY 12303. A cool selection of video dementia, with a heavy emphasis on '70s drive-in and grindhouse fare!

JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT, P.O. Box 19, Dept. SC, Butler, NJ 07405. \$3 gets you their incredible catalog (checks made out to Mike Decker) featuring the rarest grindhouse & drive-in oddities! Highly recommended!

LUMINOUS FILM & VIDEO WURKS, P.O. Box 1047, Dept. SC, Medford, NY 11763. From EuroSex epics and spaghetti westerns, to arthouse fare never released in the US! All complete with full-color packaging! You can visit them at: www.lfvw.com.

SHOCKING VIDEOS, c/o Mark Johnston, HC-77 Box 111, Hinton, WV 25951. A jaw-dropping selection of video oddities from around the world. Tons of amazing stuff, and \$3 gets you their huge catalog! Highly recommended! Email: shockingvideos@citynet.net.

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO, P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133. A mind-blowing array of rare XXX-sexploitation, Deuce favorites, kitsch shorts, and much more! Always expanding their massive catalog, you can visit them at: www.somethingweird.com.

TAPES OF TERROR, c/o P. Riggs, 11430 Mullins Dr., Dept. SC, Houston, TX 77035-2632. A terrific collection of horror & cult oddities. Their catalog is \$2, or visit: www.morticiasmorgue.com/tot.html.

UNEARTHLY VIDEO, Dept. S, P.O. Box 681914, Orlando, FL 32868-1914. \$1 gets you their catalog, brimming with horror, exploitation and beyond.

VIDEO DUNGEON, P.O. Box 873, Dept. SC, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688. Their \$3 catalog offers up sleazy horror, exploitation and weirdness from around the globe. Go to: www.videodungeon.net.

VIDEO HOLOCAUST, P.O. Box 10994, Jackson, TN 38305. Filled with Eurotrash dementia, classic XXX-porn and cult faves, send for their FREE catalog.

VIDEO JUNKIE, P.O. Box 1794, Aurora, IL 60507. Packed with the coolest videos from around the world, from EuroCrime and rare horror, to X-rated sleaze. Their catalog is \$3, or go to: www.vidjunkie.com.

VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI, P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116. An impressive mix of overseas rarities, including giallos, sexploitation, exclusive Asian dementia, and arthouse gems. Visit the updated www.vsom.com (now with descriptions of every title, plus print-quality ratings) or write for their free catalog.

VIDEO WASTELAND, P.O. Box 81551, Cleveland, OH 44181-1551. In addition to their mail-order video rental service, VW sells rare books, mags and soundtracks! \$15 gets you their tasty 160-page catalog, and check them out at: www.videowasteland.com.

WITCHING HOUR VIDEO, P.O. Box 21744, Dept. SC, Lexington, KY 40522-1744. Filled with video horror, sleaze and Asian craziness, their catalog is \$4 or head to: www.witchinghourvideo.com.

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A gang of nihilistic delinquents raise hell in a suburban community by doing whatever they want, whenever they want, **Just for the Hell of It!** These kids aren't misunderstood, underprivileged, or even angry - they're just plain bad!

Plus, a slimeball manager tries to turn a small-time teenage rock band into an overnight record-industry sensation with the help of pot parties, blackmail, and plenty of **Blast-Off Girls!**

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